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ABSTRACT

This progress report of a multi-site project involving eight elementary and middle schools examines the effects of the schools' family involvement program on children's learning; parent and teacher attitudes; school climate; and district, state, and federal policy. The report also examines the ways in which selected policies aid or obstruct school efforts to reach out to implement programs, and it identifies strategies for developing policies that support family and community involvement programs. The introductory section of the report provides information on the background and components of the project, and the purposes and questions for research. The second section discusses the changes in the relationship between the parents and teachers on the action research teams. The next section of the report provides case studies of the progress made at each of the individual schools during the first year of the project. The eight schools covered are: (1) Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools (Minneapolis); (2) Atenville Elementary School (Atenville, West Virginia); (3) Fairfield Court Elementary School (Richmond, Virginia); (4) Ferguson-Florissant Early Education Program (Florissant, Missouri); (5) Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option School (Chicago); (6) Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School (Boston); and (7) Matthew Sherman Elementary School (San Diego, California). The case studies include a brief description of relevant school, district, state, and federal policies which influence each program, and a description of the research design for the next 2 years. The appendix contains federal legislation contexts with funding sources. (SM)

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

GETTING STARTED

Action Research in

Family-School-Community Partnerships

Don Davies
Ameetha Palanki
Patricia Burch

Report No. 17 / March 1993

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GETTING STARTED

Action Research in Family-School-Community Partnerships

Don Davies
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Boston University

Report No. 17

March 1993

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The nation's schools must do more to improve the education of all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if families and communities work with children, with each other, and with schools to promote successful students.

The mission of this Center is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. A second important goal is to improve the connections between and among these major social institutions.

Two research programs guide the Center's work: the Program on the Early Years of Childhood, covering children aged 0-10 through the elementary grades; and the Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence, covering youngsters aged 11-19 through the middle and high school grades.

Research on family, school, and community connections must be conducted to understand more about all children and all families, not just those who are economically and educationally advantaged or already connected to school and community resources. The Center's projects pay particular attention to the diversity of family cultures and backgrounds and to the diversity in family, school, and community practices that support families in helping children succeed across the years of childhood and adolescence. Projects also examine policies at the federal, state, and local levels that produce effective partnerships.

A third program of Institutional Activities includes a wide range of dissemination projects to extend the Center's national leadership. The Center's work will yield new information, practices, and policies to promote partnerships among families, communities, and schools to benefit children's learning.

ABSTRACT

This is a progress report of a multi-site action research project involving eight elementary and middle schools. The eight schools are collaborating with the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning and the Institute for Responsive Education on a multi-year study of the effects of their family involvement program on children's learning, parent-teacher attitudes, school climate and on district, state and Federal policy.

The study is unique in its concern with the two-way influence of policy on family community school collaboration efforts. A 1991 Center survey of family and community involvement programs revealed that most school-based interventions have little connection to broader policy initiatives. The present study will examine the ways in which selected policies can aid or obstruct school efforts and identify strategies for helping policies support family and community involvement programs.

The main feature of the report is eight descriptive case studies. Each "case" offers a picture of the participating school and its community, describes the particular intervention being studied, sketches the activities to date of school-based research teams, and describes relevant policy developments at the school, district, state and federal level.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The Parent Teacher Action Research Project described in this report is being conducted by the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning under the direction of the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE), a Boston-based national non-profit organization. The League of Schools Reaching Out is a national network which was begun in the spring of 1990 and now has member schools in 22 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and five other countries.

IRE seeks to imbue the League overall and its member schools with two ideas:

- that all children can learn and achieve social and academic success, including those children that are considered most at-risk, least likely to succeed.

- that such an ambitious goal as success for all children can only be achieved through the combined and coordinated efforts of school staff, families, and other community agencies and resources.

Surveys of Practices

In 1990-91, we surveyed the policies and practices in League schools, using a mail questionnaire, telephone interviews with about 16 principals, and site visits by our researchers to schools in eight urban districts. We were interested in getting a better picture of the schools' approach to family-school-community collaboration. What was the scope of the school's family-school-community collaboration activities and to what extent are these efforts being integrated into the school's overall improvement plan? School activities were categorized according to a six part typology of family-community-school efforts. (See box, page 2)

The results of the survey were published in a Center report entitled A Portrait of Schools Reaching Out. A brief summary of some of the main conclusions will provide a useful background for this progress report on the Parent Teacher Action Research project.

TYPOLOGY OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Type 1: Basic obligations of families.
Families are responsible for providing for children's health and safety, developing parenting skills and child-rearing approaches that prepare children for school and that maintain healthy child development across grades, and building positive home conditions that support learning and behavior all across the school years. Schools help families to develop the knowledge and skills they need to understand their children at each grade level through workshops at the school or in other locations and in other forms of parent education, training, and information giving.

Type 2: Basic obligations of schools.
The schools are responsible for communicating with families about school programs and children's progress. Communications include the notices, phone calls, visits, report cards, and conferences with parents that most schools provide. Other innovative communications include information to help families to choose or change schools and to help families help students select curricula, courses, special programs and activities, and other opportunities at each grade level. Schools vary the forms and frequency of communications and greatly affect whether the information sent home can be understood by all families. Schools strengthen partnerships by encouraging two-way communications.

Type 3: Involvement at school.
Parents and other volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school are involved, as are families who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events. Schools improve and vary schedules so that more families are able to participate as volunteers and as audiences. Schools recruit and train volunteers so that they are helpful to teachers, students, and school improvement efforts at school and in other locations.

Type 4: Involvement in learning activities at home.
Teachers request and guide parents to monitor and assist their own children at home. Teachers assist parents in how to interact with their children on learning activities at home that are coordinated with the children's classwork or that advance or enrich learning. Schools enable families to understand how to help their children at home by providing information on academic and other skills required of students to pass each grade, with directions on how to monitor, discuss and help with homework and practice and reinforce needed skills.

Type 5: Involvement in decision-making, governance, and advocacy.
Parents and others in the community serve in participatory roles in the PTA/PTO, Advisory Councils, Chapter 1 programs, school site management teams, or other committees or school groups. Parents also may become activists in independent advocacy groups in the community. Schools assist parents to be leaders and representatives by training them in decision-making skills and in how to communicate with all of the parents they represent; by including parents as true, not token, contributors to school decisions, and by providing information to community advocacy groups so that they may knowledgeably address issues of school improvement.

Type 6: Collaboration and exchange with community organizations.
Schools collaborate with agencies, businesses, cultural organizations, and other groups to share responsibility for children's education and future success. Collaboration includes school programs that provide or coordinate children and families' access to community and support services, such as before- and after-school care, health services, cultural events, and other programs. Schools vary in how much they know about and draw on community resources to enhance and enrich the curriculum and other student experiences. Schools assist families with information on community resources that can help strengthen home conditions and assist children's learning and development.

Source: Epstein, J.L. (1992). School and Family Partnerships Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.

CURRENT PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES ACROSS REACHING OUT SCHOOLS

1. The level of reaching out activity reported by schools is high.

• Every school reports offering at least three activities across six major types of family, school and community connections: 1) School Help for Families, 2) Family Help for Schools, 3) School-Home Communication, 4) Involvement in Home Learning Activities, 5) Decision-making, Advocacy and Governance, and 6) Collaboration and Exchanges with the Community.

2. Many reaching out schools are redefining themselves as community institutions by serving families and other community residents and by exchanging resources with other community institutions.

• Forty-three percent provide direct services to the community including adult education workshops, clothing exchanges, and vaccination clinics.

3. Traditional strategies remain predominant.

• At least eighty percent of schools hold parent-teacher conferences, have parents help out on field trips, and require them to check homework.

4. Few of the schools appear to have programs which are sufficiently comprehensive to address the extensive and diverse needs of all the partners.

• Only three out of the forty-two schools surveyed reported having multiple strategies across the major types of family and community activity.

5. The policy environment remains obscure to many at the school level.

• Thirty-three percent of principals report being unaware of 1988 Chapter 1 legislative changes concerning the use of funds for parent involvement.

Collaboration as a Theme

The Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning has as its central organizing framework the concept of shared and overlapping responsibilities of families, communities, and schools for the social and academic success of all children. Through several longitudinal projects, it is seeking to learn what strategies work and under what conditions to make this concept of shared responsibility operational.

Several of these projects are collaborative, involving Center researchers, school administrators and teachers, parents, and community representatives. In these projects, school practitioners and parents are asked to be partners in research as well as in school improvement activities. Such partnerships have high potential, but they are also fraught with problems and have important administrative and policy implications. To help facilitate the process of bringing together parents and teachers in this new capacity, on-site facilitators have been hired for each school.

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project is collaborative in three important ways. First, it is a collaboration between the Center and the Institute for Responsive Education and its national reform project known as the League of Schools Reaching Out. In contrast to the Center, which draws its funds jointly from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the League is funded by several private foundations: The Pew Charitable Trusts, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Plan for Social Excellence, the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Leon Lowenstein Foundation, and the Boston Globe Foundation.

This aspect of the collaboration is unusual as it involves several public and private sources of funding and joint sponsorship by a research and development center located in five universities and a non-profit organization. The complexity of sponsorship and funding is largely a plus factor in terms of visibility, credibility, access to resources, multiple channels for communication, and potential national impact.

The second and much more interesting kind of collaboration is between the Center and IRE on the one hand and teachers, parents, and administrators in eight League schools. The eight schools collaborating with IRE and the Center in the Parent Teacher Action Research project are the Samuel Gompers School in Chicago, Illinois; the Patrick O'Hearn School in Boston, Massachusetts; the Fairfield Court Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia; the Matthew Sherman Elementary School in San Diego, California; the Anwatin and the Northeast Middle Schools in Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Atenville Elementary School in Atenville, West Virginia; and the Ferguson-Florissant School District in Florissant, Missouri.

The third type of collaboration is between the schools and neighboring universities. While all the sites do not have collaborations with universities, at least half do. For example, in Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota has worked extensively with the Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools to establish parent and community involvement in their schools. Through the Partnership for School Success, the University of Minnesota has provided funding and in-kind contributions to the schools including surveys for measuring the impact of their program. The University of Minnesota funds the PATHS project (along with other parent involvement programs) in Minneapolis, while IRE supplies funds for their on-site facilitator. The facilitators at O'Hearn, Anwatin, Northeast, Sherman, Atenville, and Ferguson-Florissant all have university ties as faculty members, graduate students, and researchers. The Center's university connection also provides resources to the project through off-site facilitators, research consultants, and data collection strategies and assistance. Fairfield Court, as part of its grant with the Plan for School Excellence, has bi-weekly meetings between parent educators, tutors, mentors, and teachers with college students from the Virginia Commonwealth University. Fairfield Court has also discussed possibilities of the university working on informal evaluation of specific program components.

At least 152 people are directly involved as researchers -- members of action research teams, facilitators, the central office team, and consultants. This large and significantly varied action research corps includes people in seven school-community locations in six states: 54 parents, 37 classroom teachers and other professional staff, six school principals, two community representatives, one middle school student, six field facilitators hired by IRE, and a research staff of four and several consultants in the Center's Boston site. The research team is diverse in many ways: 1) by age -- ages range from third graders to grandparents; 2) by race and ethnicity -- about 50% African-American, 22% Hispanic; 2% Asian and other minority and 25% non-Hispanic white; 3) by educational background -- from those with little or no formal education to several with advanced college degrees; 4) by gender -- with about two-thirds female, one-third, male; and 5) by geography -- with sites including the San Diego barrio; southside Chicago; suburban St. Louis; two parts of Minneapolis; center city Richmond, Virginia; rural West Virginia, and the Dorchester section of Boston.

The on-site facilitators were hired jointly by the schools and League/IRE staff. The facilitators were chosen on the basis of their ties to the school as well as the community surrounding the school. Qualifications of facilitators varied from university-trained facilitators to community activists. For example, Carol Klass, facilitator for Ferguson-Florissant, has worked with the school district for years and conducted a previous action research project for the district. Her qualifications as an action researcher were critical for establishing the reflective process in the Boxes for Babes project. Similarly, at Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools in Minneapolis, the facilitator, Shui Fong Lam, had worked with the parents at the Northeast Middle

School as part of the University of Minnesota's Partnership for School Success before joining the PATHS project as a facilitator. She is also a graduate student at the University. At the Sherman school, Rene Nuñez is a community activist in the Latino community as well as a graduate student at San Diego State University. He was particularly instrumental in organizing Latino parents around educational issues. Like Rene Nuñez, Ilene Carver, facilitator for the O'Hearn, is a parent and community activist. She is a board member of the Parents Institute for Quality Urban Education in Boston. Other facilitators at Atenville in West Virginia (Dr. Stan Maynard), Fairfield Court in Richmond, VA (Dr. Virgie Binford) and Gompers Fine Arts Option School (Dr. Elizabeth Allen) have had long standing ties to the school. Dr. Stan Maynard, a professor at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia collaborated with current principal Darlene Dalton and former principal Peggy Adkins in the design of an elementary school science curriculum which received state-wide recognition. Dr. Virgie Binford has been affiliated with the Richmond Public Schools since 1964 where she has served as a classroom teacher, Head Start Director, Elementary Supervisor, and Follow Through Director. Dr. Elizabeth Allen has worked with the Gompers Community and staff for a number of years. Since her retirement from the Chicago Board of Education, she has conducted workshops, organized Chapter 1 meetings and performed numerous other services.

Components of the Project

From the outset we believed that a highly collaborative approach to the study was essential for two reasons: a) an externally imposed study probably would not work and would not reveal much of an inside, grassroots perspective, and b) we are ideologically committed to collaboration with parents, teachers, and school officials in both research and in action. The main elements of the project include:

1. Choice of Schools

We wanted willing school partners who explicitly shared our ideological commitment to success for all children and a collaborative approach to achieving it. We issued a detailed RFP in the late spring to all League members describing the ideology, the requirements, the methodology, the financial conditions, and the possible benefits. We received about 20 proposals and used a staff committee process to select nine schools in eight project sites. (The project in Minneapolis has two school sites.) The selected schools entered into a written agreement with IRE and the Center. Among the criteria used in selection were our interest in having geographic diversity (with at least one rural project) and different sizes and levels of schools. A site visit by a staff member was made to each school selected before a final decision was made. A key factor in the selection was evidence of strong commitment by the school principal.

2. Financial Arrangements

Small grants ranging from $5,000 to $21,000 were negotiated. Each school was expected to identify matching funds. The promised matches have not always been achieved. Assuming mutual satisfaction with the collaboration, grants will be renewed for each of the next two and a half years. The funds are to help with the implementation of the proposed intervention as well as research costs. They come from IRE's foundation funds, not from the Center on Families. In addition, the League provides the salary of the part-time site facilitator.

3. Action Research

We knew that the research questions we were asking required a grassroots perspective. We know from IRE's substantial experience with action research methodology and from the experience of many others how difficult this approach can be, and how rewarding. We also know how skeptical many other researchers are of this "messy" approach where reality sometimes conquers rigor. Nonetheless, for us, it was the best way to proceed. In a predecessor project (Schools Reaching Out) we had used a teacher action research approach (Krasnow, 1990) with some success. The action research proved to be useful as a data gathering device but also as a project intervention to involve teachers. We decided to add to both the risk and the potential of the approach by adding parents to the equation. In each school we require that an action research team be formed consisting of at least two parents and two teachers. The team, with the outside facilitator, is the primary data gathering mechanism. The action research approach, with its parent-teacher teams, is both a means to gather data and an important element to be studied in each case study.

4. Focus on Connection between Policy and Practice

The study is unique in its concern with the two-way effects of policies on schools' reaching out interventions. Past studies have focused exclusively on program or policy with little attention given to the connection between school efforts and broader initiatives at the district, state and Federal level. Our policy focus is based in part on a survey of practices and policies of forty-two schools participating in the League of Schools Reaching Out. The survey revealed that many school initiatives remain disconnected from the growing number of district, state and Federal policies aimed at supporting family and community involvement programs. IRE is encouraged by increased policy emphasis on family and community involvement. Through the Parent Teacher Action Research Study, we hope to identify the specific ways in which a tighter connection between policy and practice can support effective family and community involvement programs.

5. Outside help from IRE and the Center

On-site assistance to the school and the team is essential in a project like this one. We are providing an IRE staff person employed for eight days a month to work on site in each school. With one exception (the Minneapolis project is providing site facilitators from the University of Minnesota through another funded research project), the facilitator was selected in a collaborative process by the staff of the League in Boston, the school principal, other school staff, and parents.

We believed that it was important that the facilitator be the school's choice as well as ours. In most cases there were multiple applicants for the position, and the selection was made by a small committee to interview candidates. Interest and experience in case study research and/or action research and demonstrated ability to work with urban (or rural) school staff and parents were two primary criteria.

In the first year in which the process was being initiated the Boston office of the Center provided the assistance -- by site visits and telephone -- of IRE staff consultants.

In the Boston office, a research team has also been formed which consists of the principal investigator (Don Davies) and two Center researchers (Patricia Burch and Ameetha Palanki) who maintain telephone contact with each school (at least bi-weekly) and are available to troubleshoot and offer encouragement or ideas through an 800 telephone number.

In addition, the project provides the regular services offered to all of the members of the League of Schools Reaching Out. There is a League team of three in Boston. They produce a newsletter, a series of working papers and videotapes, and a flow of reports and publications, including all of the Center's reports, directories, and newsletters and the IRE magazine Equity and Choice.

6. Training and Orientation

We sought early in the project to build cohesion, trust, and common understandings with the collaborating schools with a three-day training and orientation meeting in Boston for teams of principals and teachers from each school, the site facilitators, and IRE staff and consultants. The conference included presentations by each school and by Center and IRE staff, planning time for each school team, special sessions for facilitators, and visits to the two Boston schools initially participating in the project. Continuing, informal "training" is being provided by the IRE research staff.

7. Multiple Sources of Data

The richness and usefulness of the case studies from the sites and the overall report that will look across sites will depend on our ability to tap a wide variety of data sources. The project has two levels of data gathering: 1) in each school a parent-teacher action research team aided by a trained outside facilitator; 2) the central research staff in Boston (four staff members, plus occasional consultants).

Data sources include: a) a common set of survey instruments were administered to parents and teachers in each site during the first year and will be administered again near the end. The instruments were developed and tested at the University of Minnesota. In most cases the parent instruments were being done through interviews with a sample of parents by members of the action research team; the teacher instruments were completed in writing individually by school staff; b) periodic interviews with principals by on-site facilitators and by telephone and during site visits by Boston staff; c) journals kept by facilitators and notes on direct and telephone conversations between facilitators and Center researcher staff; d) data about the community and the school gathered throughout the project by the facilitator, using instruments developed by the Boston staff; e) monthly written reports prepared by each facilitator; f) notes of team meetings; and g) site visits by the Boston research team to observe action research team meetings, interview members, and interview central office staff on policy issues.

In each school, the teams and facilitators are gathering and analyzing a wide variety of data including student, family, and teacher perspectives on program impact and indicators of student achievement and behavior. More detailed comments about study design and data sources are provided in the reports on each separate school which follow.

Data are being analyzed on site by the teams and the facilitator and by Center staff. The Center staff is responsible for examining the two-way influence of parent involvement programs on school, district, state, and Federal policies. In addition, the Boston team is collecting and analyzing changes in family and educator behavior and attitudes across sites.

Purposes of the Study and Research Questions

The project seeks to learn how schools reach out to implement programs and strategies to influence student and family learning, and how policies can support or hinder these efforts.

The work we are doing will produce data that will be useful on three fronts:

- To help practitioners and planners understand what interventions work for what results and under what conditions (complementing the work of Joyce Epstein along these same lines).

- To help others who may want to replicate or adapt such approaches to understand successful approaches to and difficulties of implementation of interventions.

- To provide specific guidance to local, state, and Federal policy makers who want to encourage family-community-school collaboration.

The study also seeks to discover what lessons of policy and practice can be transferred from the "reaching out" schools to other schools. We are concerned about both formal and informal policies and about the nature, interaction, and effects of three levels of policy -- local, state, and national, and about the interaction between context -- school, community, culture -- and policy and program.

Building on our first year's work, The Parent Teacher Action Research Study takes a closer look at the issue of comprehensive family-school-community collaboration. Each participating school is employing multiple strategies of parent and community involvement collaboration which correspond to the six part typology (see page 2). Over the life of the project, schools will be looking at the combined effect of these activities (their self-designed comprehensive approach) and the extent to which activities are integrated and influence a comprehensive approach to school change.

The following presents a summary of the study as it is being conducted through 1994:

INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIVE EDUCATION
CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES,
SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN'S LEARNING
Parent Teacher Action Research Project
Research Design

Description of Study

The study is a multi-site collaborative action research project being conducted in eight schools which are part of the national reform network, the League of Schools Reaching Out. The schools applied for and received funds to implement a family and community involvement intervention of their own choosing. The study, which began in the fall of 1991 and will be completed in the spring of 1994, is focused on four main questions:

1. What are the policies (formal and informal) and practices of school-family-community collaboration in schools which have a stated intent to "reach out" for such collaboration?

2. How do formal and informal policies influence these strategies and practices? and How are the policies influenced by practices?

3. How do "reaching out schools" choose and implement their partnership interventions? What factors, barriers, and policies impede or facilitate the implementation of such components? What are the actual costs of these efforts?

4. What are the effects of the strategies and practices that are implemented on educator and family attitudes and behavior and on children's learning?

Methodology

The project has two levels of data gathering and analysis: 1) in each school a parent teacher action research team aided by a trained on-site facilitator hired by the Center and 2) central research staff in Boston.

School-based research teams are examining the effects of individual school interventions on children's learning, educator and family attitudes and behavior, and school climate.

Common School-based Data Collection Strategies

Documentation:
- Program implementation
- School and community context
- Student achievement data
- Family involvement in school-related activities.

Surveys:
- Student, family, teacher attitudes and behavior
- Student, family, teacher perspectives on program impact.

Center staff will complement school-based research through cross-site analysis and examination of effects on policy. We will examine the two way influence of parent involvement programs on school, district, state, and Federal policy. In addition, we will collect and analyze data to examine changes in family and educator behavior and attitudes across sites.

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We will look for changes in:

- Parental attitudes toward school climate, teacher competence in children's learning
- Parental attitudes toward their own contributions/competence in their children's learning
- Parent involvement at home and at school

- Teacher attitudes toward school climate and parent contributions/competence in children's learning
- Frequency and content of family involvement in school-related activities

Center Research Staff Data Collection

Documentation
- Multi-site action research project implementation
- Role/structure/decision-making of action research teams
- School, district, state and Federal policy context for each site

Surveys
- Student, family, teacher attitudes and behavior
- Student, family, teacher perspectives on program impact
- Family involvement in school-related activities

Interviews
- School principal
- District/state educational policy-makers
- Program participant/non-participant focus groups

Final Report

A final report will be completed by Fall 1994. Report will include eight school case studies and a cross-site analysis.

Components of this Report

The individual case studies in this report cover the progress made by each of the eight schools in their first year. The cases are divided into three basic components: (i) a summary of highlights from first-year activities; (ii) a brief description of the school and community context; and (iii) the research design for collecting data for the next two years. The section on school and community context includes descriptions of relevant school, district, state, and Federal policies which we have identified as having a potential influence on the program. The effect of these and other policies will be

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addressed in our final report. While the majority of this report concentrates on the activities and program development at each of the sites, we envision the activities at the IRE offices to simulate the action research process occurring on-site.

a. Summary of First Year Progress

The off-site facilitators at the IRE offices spent much of their time offering technical assistance and guidance around research design, data collection and team development. Off-site facilitators (Center researchers Patricia Burch, Ameetha Palanki, and Kate Reid) were in contact with facilitators at least twice a month. During phone calls, Center researchers discussed problems, strategies, and resources requested by on-site facilitators. Some of the issues confronted by schools included time constraints, scheduling difficulties, increasing active involvement of teachers and parents, and encouraging reflection among team members. Strategies for alleviating some of these concerns emphasized collaboration between partners on the action research team to find solutions which were appropriate for the individual circumstances of each of these sites. So, for example, the action research team in San Diego decided to assign a teacher to chair the meetings to work around the principal's scheduling conflicts. In Boston, the action research team (which met separately from the parent outreachers in the mornings when there were no parent outreachers) was disbanded and an informal parent home visitors team assumed the responsibilities of reflection.

In addition to phone calls, the off-site facilitators developed a set of worksheets to collect data on the school and community environment. The purpose of these worksheets was to take a "snapshot" of each of the schools before the intervention was implemented as well as to identify those environmental factors which contribute to the ease and difficulty of implementing these interventions. The first set of worksheets obtained information on school demographics, staff breakdown, physical appearance, and climate adopted from effective schools literature. The second set of worksheets asked teams to identify two parent involvement programs and describe how these programs are integrated or not with their particular intervention. Finally, the last set of worksheets provided a map of community resources for each of the schools with names and addresses of community organizations and service providers.

The IRE office took initial small steps to develop exchange between action research sites. This involved references to other facilitators, exchanging information and resources from one site to another, and the development of a newsletter sent to all action research sites. IRE hooked the Sherman action research team up with the O'Hearn facilitator to discuss strategies for building a home visitor program. IRE consultant Jean Krasnow sent materials on curriculum development for home visits from the Ferguson-Florissant site to the O'Hearn. A newsletter was sent out bi-monthly, beginning in the spring of 1992, to exchange basic information on progress

of the interventions and to disseminate information on data collection and action research. In the 1992-93 school year, plans are being developed to hand over authorship for the newsletter to the schools themselves in order to create more substantive exchange between sites. Plans are also in the works for structuring more exchange in a variety of ways outside of the newsletter.

Site visits were conducted in selected sites over the course of the first year by IRE staff and consultants. The primary purpose of the site visits was to get a firsthand view of school activities and assist schools with action research team development. Plans are underway for continuing site visits by off-site facilitators over the course of the next two years. Site visits will enable off-site facilitators to collect data on district and state policies which present either obstacles or resources for schools interested in initiating reaching out activities. Site visits also provide an opportunity to assist on-site facilitators with data collection and interviews with program participants as needed.

b. Research Design

The research methodology pursued by the Center's team has three components: (i) telephone interviews with on-site facilitators; (ii) site visits with program participants and district policy makers; and (iii) analysis of state and Federal policies which have an impact on each of these projects.

Telephone contact will continue over the course of the next two years. Assistance will concentrate on strategies for data collection and other forms of assistance as needed. It is expected that less assistance will be necessary for team development as the programs continue. Telephone contacts are logged into a database. The database will be used to code data across sites and types of data (e.g., surveys, interviews, telephone logs).

Several site visits will be conducted over the next two years. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews will be done with program participants as needed. Many of the site visits will concentrate on collecting data on policies which impact specific interventions. District and when possible, state policymakers will be interviewed to gather this information.

Finally, policies will be collected from state and Federal agencies related to education. These data will form the policy context in which each of these interventions are pursued. We will analyze the extent to which school-level practitioners are affected by state and Federal policies and whether schools are taking advantage of these resources. Attention will be paid to how school-level practitioners influence or are influenced by state and Federal policies, and we will draft initial recommendations to improve the "fit" between policy and practice.

Under a separate project being conducted as part of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project has been incorporated within a cross-national study of the effects of home-school-community partnerships on children's learning, family and educator attitudes, and school climate. The study, which involves more than 20 researchers in six countries (Australia, Chile, the Czech republic, Portugal, Spain, the United States), reflects the Center's belief that the overlapping influence of families, communities, and schools is universal and that understanding of the effects of specific interventions can be aided through cross-cultural research and exchange.

II. GETTING STARTED: STAGES OF TEAM BUILDING ACROSS PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH SITES

As the end of the first year approaches, the case-by-case descriptive studies demonstrate the diversity of the projects. Variation in location, participants and expectations means that a home visitor project in Boston, MA, can assume a different shape than a home visitor project in Atenville, WV or in Florissant, MO. While our projects may end up looking very different, we share a common goal: to make schools better places for all children's learning and development, and a common strategy: to help families, students, and community residents make changes in the school environment based on their own experiences and knowledge of what works.

Henry Levin of the Accelerated Schools project has a useful concept to think about change in schools. Levin conceives of school change process as involving big wheels and little wheels. The big wheels are the broader changes which a project aims for and little wheels are the events which move the change process along (Levin, 1992). If the big wheel of our parent teacher action research project is changes in school environment, then the little wheels are the relationships between parents, teachers, principals, students and community residents whose daily interactions define the learning environment. Our assumption is that when relationships across a school community become more collaborative, children win.

This discussion looks at changes in the relationship between the parents and teachers participating on action research teams. The development of an action research team was one of our first common challenges. By team development we do not just mean how the team got formed but the steps taken to help a group actually work like a team. After reviewing and discussing the information received by mail, over the phone, and in site visits, we discovered that our eight action research sites faced common challenges and moved through similar stages. What follows is a description of the common challenges we faced, the different strategies employed, and some of the surprising effects.

Phase I: Orientation to Group and Task

"What exactly is action research?"
"How is our action research team different from the school-based management team, school decision-making council, etc?"
"Has anyone done this before?" "Why do action research?" "Where can we look for ideas and answers?"

Unfamiliar Territory: What is Action Research?

What is action research and how do you do it? In November 1992, principals and facilitators from nine schools convened in Boston for a three-day orientation and training conference. As many participants commented in their evaluations, the Boston conference laid important groundwork but raised many questions, such as "Who should be on the action research team?" and "What is actually expected of us?"

Schools answered the question, "Who should be on the action research team?" in very different ways. Fairfield Court, Sherman, Anwatin, Northeast and Atenville invited the entire school to participate on the team. As a result, three schools ended up with teams which exceeded twenty members. In an effort to empower their parent members, Anwatin and Northeast purposely placed four parents for every teacher on their action research team. Atenville, a relatively smaller school, has five members. Principals selected the action research team members in three other schools (O'Hearn, Gompers, Ferguson). In most schools, parents make up a little less than half of the action research team.

By February 1992, action research teams had been formed, specific interventions or projects identified, and initial research questions posed. The next step, as one facilitator put it, was "What do we do next?" The challenge of getting started was complicated by the fact that (to the best of our knowledge) parent teacher action research has not been tried before on such a large multi-site scale. There were few ready examples of how to get started, what to avoid and what results could be expected.

To add to the challenge, there appeared to be plenty of reasons why bringing parents and teachers together for anything more than rubber stamping would not work. Anyone who had participated in previous school reforms involving decision-making councils could warn of the challenges which lay ahead. For one, assessing program strengths and weaknesses was unfamiliar territory for schools. Traditionally, this job has been left to outside researchers. Now all of a sudden, an outside researcher (IRE and the Center on Families) was urging school teams to engage in the questioning process.

A number of facilitators relayed their own and team's concerns about project goals to IRE project staff. We responded with written explanations, descriptions, personal correspondence, and increased our "one-on-one" telephone correspondence. In the second issue of our project newsletter, we explained that the open-endedness of the project was intentional. The idea, as we defined it, was to give each team the opportunity to craft a process which met the unique needs of the school and the project while sticking to our common goal of building critical reflection into school culture.

Defining Goals and Objectives

Easier said than done, a number of facilitators informed IRE staff. Lesson one in team-building is to have a clearly defined set of goals and objectives. With this in mind, action research teams defined their own specific project goals and objectives. In a March memo to her action research team, facilitator Ilene Carver of the O'Hearn school gave team members some questions to consider in light of the confusion concerning the role of the action research team:

> *How can the Action Research Team operate to make its role more meaningful to the family outreach project?*
> *How can we gather indicators of success for our project?*
> *How can we gather information from these indicators?*
> *Should we be communicating with teachers on a more regular basis about the overall family outreach effort?*

Schools such as O'Hearn and Ferguson-Florissant determined that the action research team should not be separate from the team of people responsible for the project (e.g., family outreachers, home visitors). They believed that individuals who were actually carrying out the project were in the best position to design and assess its effects.

Schools reached this conclusion at different points in the project. At Ferguson-Florissant, the decision was made to have the action research team consist of all parent educators. Facilitator Carol Klass has an extensive background in action research methodology and offered ways to structure reflection. The O'Hearn school started with a separate action research team but had early questions about its purpose. The Family Outreachers group was becoming more cohesive and taking ownership over the project while the Action Research Team floundered, looking for something to do. The decision was made to "fold" the action research team and to have the family outreachers explicitly take on the job of reflecting.

Other teams defined their role differently. The Gompers, Atenville, and Sherman action research teams are distinct groups whose primary purpose is to coordinate school-wide parent involvement activities. Sherman developed their home visitor program in conjunction with other existing parent involvement activities and decided that second grade families would benefit most from a home visitor program. Atenville team members are given responsibility for one or more projects which they then report on at meetings. At Gompers and Atenville, mentors and the phone tree coordinators meet separately from the action research team. The action research teams include a "representative" of program implementers (e.g., home visitor or mentor). This person is seen as the "middleperson" and communication link between the two teams.

Still other teams decided to make their intervention action research. At Anwatin and Northeast, the intervention of building parent-teacher cluster groups to discuss students' needs and to develop specific programs to meet these needs provided a perfect environment for introducing action research as a process for facilitating the projects and as a mechanism for comprehensive school change.

Agreeing to Collaborate

As schools reconsidered their goals and objectives, so did IRE. It seems a mistake to ask schools to form teams after a project has been designed. In many instances, the individuals who participated in writing the IRE grant were no longer part of the school. This situation created a problem for the Sherman school. Faced with a grant application that had been written by a district officer, Sherman began with the question, "Is the project described in the grant application really the one we want to carry out?" The team determined that it was not and proceeded to design a project in which there was team investment. The first year of the project was spent primarily assessing the needs of the students and their families to determine who would benefit most from a home visitor program, identifying the resources in the school (e.g., teachers) and the community (e.g., the Parent Institute for Quality Education), and planning of the home visitor program. With this firm foundation, the action research team was able to integrate the home visitor program successfully into existing parent involvement activities.

Next time around, IRE would have action research teams responsible for developing the project proposal and project design. In addition, the requirements that the school participate in action research would be made even clearer from the outset. Our goal would be to use the action research process to build ownership between parents and teachers of the design of a project in which participant evaluation was central.

Phase II: Building Participation of Parents and Teachers

"How can we get more teachers and parents involved in this project?"
"How can we deepen parents' and teachers' involvement in this project?"
"How do we get parents and teachers to show up to meetings?"
"How do we keep parents and teachers on the action research team?"

Moving Beyond Representation to Meaningful Participation

Defining goals and objectives allowed teams to take a first critical look at their projects. The majority of teams identified the need to increase the participation of both parents and teachers. Some teams anticipated the specific challenges of involving parents and teachers in the project. At a February action research meeting, the

Atenville team asked itself, "How can we make action research meaningful for parents?" At Anwatin and Northeast, teachers met before the project got started to discuss their expectations and understandings of their roles in the project. Other schools identified similar gaps once the project was underway. The O'Hearn team looked for strategies to involve teachers more fully in the Home Visitor Project. They did this not out of a sense of obligation, but because they recognized teachers as critical to the project's impact on children's classroom learning.

Creating New Opportunities for Teacher Involvement

The teams came up with different designs/strategies for involving teachers. Some teams offered teachers opportunities to take on specific, new responsibilities. Second grade teachers at Sherman have been asked to help out with developing training materials for home visitors and serving on home visitor teams. Atenville teachers used some of their annual summer in-service to discuss and design the use of portfolios. At O'Hearn, teachers were given the opportunity to organize a parent breakfast.

Recognizing that the project might be perceived by teachers as another burden on an already busy day, some teams offered rewards and incentives for teacher involvement. At Fairfield Court, prizes and recognition were offered to classes with "the most parent involvement." Principal Larry Lucio of Northeast School took participating teachers out to dinner. At the Gompers school, mentors took over teachers' classroom activities on the day of a citywide inservice.

Creating New Opportunities for Parent Involvement

Teams took similar steps to eliminate the obstacles to parent involvement in the project. Anwatin and Northeast schools provide child care and transportation to parents attending their monthly parent-teacher planning meetings. Atenville "outlawed" the use of "educational jargon" at team meetings. Parents had found use of acronyms like "EMR" alienating and confusing. Fairfield Court hosted workshops in a community-based preschool which served a large number of parents.

In a few instances, parents took on significant new responsibilities within the project. For example, parents at Atenville and Sherman were key presenters on family and community involvement at their respective district superintendent's conferences. Parents at Fairfield Court authored a book for parents on building self-esteem.

Increased parent leadership over the project has had exciting results. For example, a national parents publication was so impressed by the Fairfield self-esteem book that they wrote an article about the project. (Facilitator Virgie Binford had sent them a copy). Closer to home, the Fairfield Court action research team will create a

similar book for parents on child discipline strategies. Parent presentations on the Atenville project have led to invitations for team presentations from schools around the county.

Obstacles Remain

In spite of these gains, real obstacles to increasing parent and teacher participation remain. Teams identified the following challenges as key. One time rewards and incentives do not address the biggest obstacle to teacher participation: time. Principal Darlene Dalton has tried to address this by being the only school in the county to uphold a district policy giving teachers planning time. Other schools see constraints created by teachers' contracts and district and state policy as outside of their control.

Teachers' view of parents as non-contributors can be an important obstacle to change. Facilitators report some team members have raised concerns about parents' substantive involvement in the project. To paraphrase the sentiments of one teacher, "How can parents identified as most in need of school services be a resource for this project? If they had that capability, they wouldn't need our project."

In other instances, concerns focused on the effects of parent involvement on teachers' job security. Some teams found that offering parents significant responsibility in the program was perceived as a threat by teachers and other school staff. Teachers and other staff ask, "If parents are allowed to do the work we have been trained for, e.g. curriculum planning, home visits, what does that do to the professionalism of our careers?" Both of these concerns may dissipate as parents and teachers continually define their respective roles and responsibilities together and recognize each other's strengths as complementary.

Phase III: Group Formation and Solidarity

"There is too much to do and not enough time to do it. What is most important here?"
"The Parent Center needs a coffee maker. Home Visitors need an after-hours meeting place. Who can help?"
"We're getting into things that other people get formal training to do, are we over our heads?"
"What's happening with the other projects? Are the challenges that we're facing unique to this school?"

Needs Outstrip Resources

At various points in the first year, teams perceived the scope of the project to be expanding beyond current available resources. The signs were in teams' increasing

frustration over what they had time to accomplish and the limited resources with which to accomplish it. In telephone conversations with IRE staff, facilitators relayed teams' worries of having their hands in too many pots. Commented one parent facilitator, "We just are at the point of getting more than a few parents coming to the school and already we're talking about setting up parent centers all over the county."

Resources Are Within Reach

As the scope of projects expanded, teams began to identify both the in-house and the local community resources which could help address goals. The Atenville team began with an effort to run more effective meetings. A joint decision was made to curb the number of topics addressed at one meeting and create a regular time for individual progress reports. Likewise, the Gompers school took the simple but important step of making sure that team members were informed beforehand of the meeting schedule, agendas and activities via the monthly newsletter.

Acknowledging that the project was more than one facilitator alone could manage, the O'Hearn team gave key parents within the school full responsibility for running specific parent involvement activities. The intention was to build parent leadership for school activities and to free up the facilitator's time for targeted technical assistance and program coordination. At Sherman, individual team members (including students) were given specific responsibilities and team members gave presentations to the group.

In other instances, teams identified new sources of community support for the project. Committed to eliminating traditional obstacles to parent attendance in meetings, the Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools arranged to have meetings in local churches and community centers. Both schools are also working with the University of Minnesota, which provides facilitation, technical assistance, funding, and materials to the program. Likewise, O'Hearn holds its monthly family outreacher meetings in a local church; Boston Public School policy prevents the use of the school building after hours. The off-site location was convenient for most families and perceived by teachers to be a more comfortable setting than hosting the meetings in parents' homes.

With IRE and other project funds frozen in a near-bankrupt district account, Atenville contacted local banks and health clinics to donate furniture for their newly-opened parent center. In other instances, teams made new contacts with community organizations and state policymakers and agency representatives (Anwatin and Northeast, Fairfield Court, Gompers and Atenville) to provide in-service training on curricular issues to team members, to convene community leaders for informational meetings about the project, and to lay the groundwork for future financial support (Fairfield Court, Atenville).

Principals of two schools assisted their team in securing additional financial resources for project. Principal Cecilia Estrada of Sherman School submitted a proposal to have teachers serve on team. Principal Blondean Davis of Gompers traveled to Ohio to participate in a conference on mentoring and wrote a proposal to National Community Services: Serve America to create a junior mentors program.

Identifying new supports for projects seemed to strengthen teams. From our perspective, teams appeared to have a growing sense of group solidarity and cohesiveness. Surveyed on their participation in the school, mentors at Gompers identified fellow mentors as a kind of extended family with whom they felt a close affinity and sense of purpose. Family outreachers at O'Hearn have created a brochure on their program with a picture of "the team" on the front cover. Parents on the Atenville team also described new feelings of "belonging to the school family." At Northeast, teachers and parents are communicating in ways never imagined before. Parent educators in Ferguson-Florissant look forward to action research meetings as an opportunity to hash over individual problems and celebrate or commiserate over their program.

Increased sense of team cohesiveness appears to generate positive group action. For example, O'Hearn family outreachers participating in a one-day retreat developed an impressive action plan for the 1992-93 school year. The Atenville team has sought out opportunities to talk to other schools about their project.

Building an Action Research Network

A similar process took place for project staff at IRE. Definition of our roles as school contacts, delegation of tasks, and successful requests for additional in-house support strengthened our sense of ourselves as a team committed to working on the project through its ups and downs. It also gave us some time and space to consider the limits of some of our own strategies. One of our goals for the year was to create a network of action research sites. We created a bi-monthly project newsletter in an attempt to keep team members abreast of activities in other schools, but were informed that a much more meaningful exchange of resources and information between facilitators was needed.

Another facilitator informed us that there was little time to read the newsletter anyway and instead effort should be put into active exchange of project resources, e.g. home visitor log books. As a result of this feedback, the following changes are planned. Instead of IRE staff writing project updates, the action research newsletter will become an informal monthly letter between facilitators. Building on the learning that the best resources are within reach, we plan to compile and distribute project materials (which schools have developed and adapted) more aggressively.

Phase IV: Moving from Action to Reflection

"How can we expect to think creatively about this project as a group when we can't even listen to each other?"
"As a facilitator, I keep a journal on the project but how can that help get the team more involved in thinking critically about this project?"
"How can we create the conditions which will make it possible for us to share and generate ideas about this project?"

Obstacles to Reflection

At the outset of the project, the reflective half of action research seemed a burden to most facilitators and their teams. The demands of beginning a new project left little time for reflection. "You can't have it both ways," facilitators seemed to suggest to us in bi-weekly calls and monthly reports. In the context of a new project, new colleagues, and objectives, this elusive thing called reflection will have to wait.

A number of schools saw yellow flags when individual team members began to report feeling overwhelmed and stretched too thin, when tensions at team meetings mounted and listening skills deteriorated. On this end, a few facilitators informed us that they could not and would not do it all (data collection worksheets, project facilitation, etc.). Under mounting pressures, the reflection part of action research appeared to be an unaffordable luxury. As one facilitator put it, "I think the project is going really well, we're doing everything we thought we would and more, but the worksheets take up precious time that could be spent doing other things and keeping a journal is out of the question."

Simple Steps to Reflection

Gradually, schools have begun to move towards making critical thinking an integral part of the project. They have taken simple steps to make reflection easy and useful for schools. For example, Carol Klass of Ferguson-Florissant undertook the responsibility of taking notes at meetings. She gave team members Xerox copies of the notes with wide margins for team members to make comments. With this structure in place, parent educators look forward to action research meetings as a forum for discussing specific problems, sharing stories and strategies for solving problems, and commiserating over common dilemmas. Likewise, Virgie Binford of Fairfield Court gave parents samples of journal writing. The journal writing project went over well with parents and will be expanded next year. It will create opportunities for parents to reflect in their own way about the information discussed during home visits.

Gompers' strategy was to generate new information about the project which would serve as grist for reflection. The team started by having teachers, students, and

mentors complete simple questionnaires about project effects. Other strategies were targeted towards creating time and space for structured reflection. Some schools formed subgroups of parents to do planning and coordinating so that there would be more meeting time for actual problem-solving. Schools such as O'Hearn and Atenville held off-site team retreats. O'Hearn's mid- and end-of-the-year retreats gave the team opportunity to thoughtfully consider their year's work.

Schools' definition of the action research process has had concrete positive outcomes. All eight schools have begun the 1992-93 school year with some clear ideas about what aspects of the project need to be strengthened and/or dropped. A perfect example is the Gompers project, whose survey of students alerted the school to the need for female mentors. Another example is the focusing of home visits at Sherman on second grade families.

Schools also have defined clear strategies for documenting project effects over the next two years. School research designs are intended to help gather information about the project which is immediately useful to children and families. For example, the Atenville Elementary School plans to compile child and family portfolios. The use of portfolios will capture subtle changes in children, and will also deepen the school's assessment of child progress and encourage fuller discussion on the part of parents and teachers. In the Ferguson-Florissant project, videotapes of home visits document changes in parents' attitudes and behavior in interacting with their children.

Action research involves planning what to do next and determining what should be dropped. We have found that unlike less effective project managers, action research teams have little patience for aspects of the project which seem to be going nowhere. In their decisions to revamp an entire project, to merge action research teams, to change a school policy, teams are making decisions which place children's and families' needs first.

Conclusion

Action research like team development is a cyclical process. Year-end reports completed by individual action research team members raised scores of questions such as "How can we get more parents involved in this project?" "What can we do to improve our listening skills?" "Where do we go from here?" These questions, however, point teams back to earlier challenges, suggesting that fundamental issues are never resolved once and for all. As new challenges arise, team members may find themselves back in a previous phase of team development. For example, getting a local community advocacy group to help the team out with parent training may raise new questions about how to expand the project to include more parents -- particularly

those not currently involved in the school. Involving more parents in team meetings initially may challenge existing members' sense of cohesiveness.

As each site moves along in its second year, team members will be addressing issues of implementation and initial assessment of their program's impact. We do not doubt that each of the action research teams will be confronted with some of the same issues of group goals and tasks, membership, solidarity, and reflection. While this may appear disconcerting to some, we should keep in mind that this messy process is the means by which team members learn -- about themselves, about their program, about their students, and about what works. We, as off-site facilitators, have learned to build reflection and data collection into existing practices as much as possible in order to avoid overwhelming our site-based partners. The second year will concentrate on collecting data on implementation strategies and the importance of policies in enabling or constraining these teams' efforts to implement an intervention. As the project continues, we will encourage the raising of questions and the reflective process. We also will be evaluating the action research process as a viable strategy for encouraging positive action and determining project success.

Next Steps

During the 1992-93 school year, action research teams are engaged in data collection about the implementation and initial effects of their specific interventions. Teams are using a variety of data collection strategies -- many of which have been designed by the teams themselves. Examples include home visit videotapes, parent journals, family portfolios, and baby biographies, all of which enable families to keep track of how reaching out activities are impacting their children's behavior and development, and simple questionnaires for teachers and program implementers (e.g. home visitors and mentors). These strategies supplement traditional data collection strategies of surveys, interviews, and site visits. Off-site facilitators from Boston will conduct one site visit to each school in 1992-93 to collect data on district and state policies which may have some connection to the programs. Site visits also provide an opportunity to work with teams on issues of data collection and, to a lesser degree, team development. In addition to site visits, school teams consisting of the facilitator, principal, one teacher, and one parent from the action research team will be invited to a training workshop in Spring 1993 on data collection and other topics identified by facilitators.

In the Spring of 1993, action research teams will begin to collect data on the effects of the program on student/family beliefs and attitudes as well as changes in school climate. These data will be supplemented by information about the effects of school, district, and state policies on program development and effects. This information will be culled by Boston staff in interviews with program participants,

program implementers, principals, and policymakers at the district and state levels. Information about the impact and potential uses of Federal policies will be collected as well.

In 1993-94, writing of the case studies for the final report will begin and incorporate a collaborative process between one parent, one teacher, the facilitator, and the Boston contact for each school. The final report will include a policy analysis about the ways in which building-level, district, state, and Federal policies help or hinder family-school-community partnerships and the potential ways in which schools can take better advantage of existing policy resources.

We take the fact that questions are being generated as fast as new strategies are tried as evidence of a project's health. No doubt we have a long way to go before we call this project a success. But if the healthy development of teams is any indicator, we are all off to a good start.

GETTING STARTED: STAGES OF TEAM BUILDING ACROSS ACTION RESEARCH SITES

	Obstacles	Strategies	Effects
Phase I: Orientation to Group and Task	What exactly is action research? How is our action research team different from our school-decision making council? Has anyone done this before?	Define objectives, measures of success relationship to other school initiatives	Group Direction Team Formation
Phase II: Building attendance Participation activities of Parents & Teachers	How can we get more teachers and parents involved in this project?	Create new opportunities for parents and teachers: to design project materials receive training, to report on project, etc.	Project Resources School Publicity Increased at school
	How can we deepen parents' and teachers' involvement in this project?	Offer rewards and incentives: meals, child care, transportation and awards	
Phase III: Group Cohesiveness Group Formation & Solidarity	There is too much to do and not enough time to do it. What is most important here? Who can help us? Where can we get training? What's happening with the other projects?	Run effective meetings Share responsibility and the work load Identify new resources of financial and in-kind support, e.g. community organizations, businesses and university partners	More time for reflection More money to do things
Phase IV: Moving from Action to Reflection	How can we think creatively about this project when we can't even listen to each other?	Generate written feedback from project participants Host off-site retreats	Action Plans Understanding of project strengths and weaknesses
	Who has time to keep a journal?	Delegate coordinating to sub-group Have facilitator share own notes with group	

III. SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORTS

Anwatin Middle School
256 Upton Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55405
Phone: (612) 627-3150
Fax: (612) 627-3162
Grades: 6-8
Enrollment: 732

Northeast Middle School
2955 NE Hayes
Minneapolis, MN 55148
Phone: (612) 627-3042
Fax: (612) 627-3100
Grades: 6-8
Enrollment: 836

Parent Partnership: Parents and Teachers Headed for Success

Action Research Project: What is the impact of parent-teacher initiated interventions on school-home communication?

Action Research Team Members

Parents
Roberta Behrens
Diana Hadley
Carolyn Johnson
Jacqueline Jones
Sandra Lucius
Mary Powell
Roslyn Rogers
Kitty Young
Mamie Young
Vivian Lee Toney

Teachers
Stephanie Burrage
Rose Curran
Ann England
Colleen Ryan
Lecia Van Amerongen
Carla Steinbach

Other
Claudette Thompson, Community Liaison
Mary Sinclair, Project Coordinator
David Evelo, Intervention Coordinator

Principal/Anwatin Middle School
Dawn Mennes

Principal/Northeast Middle School
Larry Lucio

Facilitator
Shui Fong Lam

ANWATIN AND NORTHEAST MIDDLE SCHOOLS:
Parents And Teachers Heading for Success (PATHS)

Summary of First Year Progress

In December 1991, both Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools created a team of parents and teachers to develop and evaluate strategies to enhance student success through home-school collaboration. At the Anwatin Middle School, there are five teachers and 20 parents on the team. At the Northeast, there are six teachers and 24 parents on the team. Monthly meetings were held over the remainder of the school year. The meetings were held at a community site, in the evenings. Child care, transportation, and meals were provided. Discussion during the meetings was held in small groups to ensure that all members had the opportunity to participate in discussions. Each group then reported to the larger team. The team meetings were facilitated by the Partnership for School Success (PSS) staff from Minneapolis Public Schools and University of Minnesota. Currently housed at both middle schools, the PSS project is a dropout prevention project targeting youth with learning and behavioral disabilities.

The PATHS project was initiated by Minneapolis Public School staff and University of Minnesota researchers involved in another project (the PSS project) with a similar mission at Anwatin and Northeast. It is funded in part by the Institute for Responsive Education, which provided $20,800 for the first year of the two and a half year grant.

Because they did not begin with the intention of forming action research teams, the PATHS teams at Anwatin and Northeast are a bit different from the teams in the other school sites. However, over the course of the 1991-92 school year, the teams have evolved into what more closely resembles action-research teams. The team members took sole responsibility for identifying the issues they would like to work on. Furthermore, they themselves designed and implemented small projects to address these issues.

During the first meeting in December 1991, parents and teachers met to get to know each other and fill out the surveys used by all the schools participating in this Parent-Teacher Action Research project.

In January, the teachers met to clarify their responsibilities and relationships to parents in this project. The teachers came away with the understanding that parents would be perceived as consultants and partners in discussing how parents and teachers can better communicate with each other. The role of the PSS staff had been to serve as facilitators and to provide resources and support to parents and teachers. The intent of

this meeting was merely informational for teachers and not a planning or decision-making meeting. Teachers were very concerned about parents not being present at this meeting and, therefore, focused on their questions and avoided making decisions for the team. In their view, such decisions should include the parents.

Over time, the teams met to discuss issues of concern and ideas on how to improve communication between teachers and parents. In February, members of each team met to generate a list of issues or concerns they would like to work on. In the March meetings, members of each team prioritized these concerns and developed a tentative action plan for the rest of this year and into the next.

The focus of the research in this project is to examine the perceptions families and teachers hold regarding the interaction between home and school. Because of time limitations and a desire to move to action, both teams decided to implement short-term projects, with the understanding that they will develop a longer term strategy during the 1992-93 school year.

At the Northeast, the team decided to work on a sex education project. They saw working together in planning such a curriculum as one of the vehicles to enhance communication between parents and teachers. The team was visited by a speaker about sex education from the Minnesota Department of Health as a preview of the kind of presentation that might be made to the students. The team also reviewed a couple of videotapes on the topic to decide what was appropriate. The team continued to plan and arrange presentations on sex education in school. The reaction of the students to the presentations was good. They were quite open in the discussion. In addition to the project on sex education, the Northeast team was able to run phone lines into each of the PATHS teachers' classroom.

At Anwatin, the team was in the process of creating direct communication links between home and classroom using newly installed telephones and answering machines in the classrooms. The group decided to have teachers tape messages about school work and activities as well as mail mid-quarter progress reports to parents. Through this focus on communication, the team hoped to open up discussion on other issues such as curriculum, self-esteem, shared decision-making, homework, expectations, and discipline.

Next steps for both teams include assembling the same parents and teachers on the teams next year, expanding the number of parents and teachers on teams, and identifying and field testing more long-term action plans that could be institutionalized on a broader scale.

School Context: The Anwatin Middle School

As of Spring 1992, the school mission and school improvement plan at the Anwatin was still in the process of being developed. Principal Dawn Mennes was working on articulating a vision for the whole school in order to provide coherence and consistency between new and existing programs or interventions.

Her main objectives were to challenge and raise expectations for "academically capable" and "middle range" students in order to build a "lifelong pursuit of learning." Her objectives for students who have not been successful so far were to identify how to help these students become more successful and to increase their sense of self-esteem. Her strategy, as facilitated by the PATHS project, was to build better connections (and further the educators' understanding of these students) between these students' lives at home and school. Principal Mennes, however, left Anwatin at the end of the 1991-92 school year. The incoming principal, Cheryl Creecy, has expressed strong support for the project and, in the past, has actively involved families in the educational process of her previous schools.

The Anwatin Middle School has an enrollment of 732 students who are primarily African-American (44.3%) and Caucasian (41.7%). Approximately 40% qualify for public assistance of one kind or another. The school has a parent room, a media center, a staff lounge, an auditorium, a gymnasium, and cafeteria for students and staff. The classrooms are arranged around a courtyard with a city park next door to the school. Visitors to the school will find it in good, clean condition with little graffiti or other signs of vandalism.

The school provides a relatively safe environment for students with roughly three disciplinary referrals a day; however, there were a number of suspensions (775 in 1990-91) and three expulsions because of weapons in school.

The staff at the Anwatin consists of the principal, two vice-principals, 43 teachers, 27 special education teachers, 11 teachers' aides, six custodial staff, and a contingent of social service and community personnel including a parent/community liaison.

Anwatin builds upon a variety of community resources to enhance their programs in the school. For example, Anwatin draws upon the Dain Bosworth Company, which serves as its business partner. Tutoring support is provided by the Neighborhood Involvement Program; support groups and recreational activities are provided by the YMCA/YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, the city schools, and Community Education Officer. Students and staff have also received mediation training provided by the district and Hennepin County's Council on Crime and Justice.

Local churches and community centers, such as Zion Baptist Church and Sabathani Community Center, have provided low cost meeting rooms for the PATHS teams.

School Context: The Northeast Middle School

The school mission is to provide a caring and supportive environment for encouraging students to develop academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. The objective of the school is to instill a sense of self-esteem and responsibility in each student as well as successful academic achievement. The mission also involves respecting cultural and learning diversity and teaching students to value differences.

Principal Lucio is committed to creating effective curriculum and instruction for students, increasing family involvement in school, and improving the school climate. This project facilitates his objective to increase family involvement in school and improve communication between home and school.

Northeast has an enrollment of 836 students primarily consisting of African-Americans (45%) and Caucasians (43.8%). Approximately half qualify for some form of public assistance.

The school staff consists of the principal, two vice-principals, 64 teachers, 16 special education teachers, 17 teachers' aides, and six custodial staff.

Northeast is a traditional brick school building with three floors. In good physical shape, the school has a pool, cafeteria, staff lounge, and lunch room. It also has a media center and auditorium.

Northeast had about 15 referrals a day (or 2500 in 1990-91) and a relatively large number of suspensions (1788 in 1990-91). Principal Lucio is concerned with these rates and is working on alternative discipline policy to produce a win/win situation for all involved. Working with teams, he is accomplishing this goal and working on reversing existing trends towards suspensions and referrals.

Northeast draws upon different community resources to help with its outreach programs. Principal Lucio, with the support of the school's Community Education Liaison, formed an inter-agency group formally linking the school with the broader community. Some examples of Northeast's current community relationships include: after school activities and adult education supported by Community Education; AT&T serves as the school's business partner providing tutoring services and sponsoring the annual back-to-school spaghetti dinner; tutoring and mentoring services are also provided by Edison High School students, YMCA and Upward Bound; support groups are also facilitated by the Hospitality House and YMCA/YWCA; the students and staff have also received mediation training supported by the school district and

Council on Crime and Justice. Like Anwatin, the Zion Baptist Church and Sabathani Community Center offer meeting rooms for the PATHS meetings for reduced prices. Northeast also uses the YMCA Adult Program and the Park Avenue Methodist Church for parent services and computer access.

Policy Context

Anwatin and Northeast are part of a progressive reform effort initiated by the University of Minnesota as well as by the State of Minnesota. The following section briefly identifies the policy context in which the PATHS project develops.

City-Level Policies

While the Minneapolis Public School District does not have an explicit parent involvement policy, state educational code requires the convening of a local community advisory committee responsible for advising the district on implementing a parent involvement program. The Urban Coalition of Minneapolis, Minneapolis school administrators, the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, and the University of Minnesota have been working with other agencies and organizations to develop city-wide parent involvement guidelines.

In addition to this community advisory committee, the PATHS project has benefitted from technical assistance and resources from the University of Minnesota. Through the Partnership for School Success, the PATHS project has received funding from the University of Minnesota as well as in-kind services. The University has developed needs assessment questionnaires on parental, teacher, and student attitudes toward home-school partnerships and school climate. These surveys were administered to all the action-research sites participating in this project.

In addition to the surveys, the University provides on-site facilitation of the project and assistance with program administration, working closely with both schools to determine what the needs are of the families and communities they serve and for recruiting families to participate in the PATHS program. The University is able to provide resources for child care and transportation without the added burden of requisitions and red tape often encountered by school-based program administrators.

State-Level Policies

The State Department of Education in Minnesota does have a parent involvement policy which articulates program goals and suggests activities to put these programs into effect. The Department of Education is responsible for developing guidelines and models for programs which: "(1) engage the interests of parents or

guardians in recognizing and meeting the educational, intellectual, and physical needs of their school-age children; (2) promote healthy self-concepts among parents or guardians and other family members; (3) offer parents or guardians a chance to share and learn about educational skills, techniques, and ideas; and (4) provide learning experiences for parents or guardians and their school-age children." The Department is aware of the need for training of teachers in order to implement an effective parent involvement program and, subsequently, has allowed districts to set aside $5 per pupil for staff development about parent involvement consistent with the goals outlined above.

This state policy also specifies a model which includes (but is not limited to) hiring parent liaisons, developing home-based learning activities, parent centers, parent educational programs, effective communication on student progress, inclusion of families in classroom instruction, and input of families in planning, developing, and implementing school programs.

The PATHS program provides a mechanism for including all these components and more. By convening parents and teachers together, the PATHS teams enable parents to participate in the development of materials and curriculum for home-based and school-based instruction. The PATHS team in Anwatin created a communication network which keeps parents abreast of school expectations and student progress. The PATHS program utilizes a community liaison to facilitate the recruitment of parents into the program by providing child care and transportation and helping with other problems encountered by parents.

In addition to the state parent involvement policy, the State of Minnesota has a number of state-level reforms and programs which provide support for families. For example, Minnesota was a pioneer in state-level cross-district school choice. Transportation to and from district borders is paid for by the state, enabling many families to participate in the choice program. The state choice plan also includes a postsecondary options program, a second chance program, and area learning centers. The postsecondary options program enables students to attend college-level courses. The second chance program is offered to students who have dropped out of school, while the area learning centers are for students at-risk of dropping out of school.

Minnesota is also a pioneer in statewide community education. Each school district receives funding for each resident (not just families) in their attendance boundaries for use in community education programs. The total budget for community education is roughly $8.1 million. Community education has included adult enrichment classes, home improvement classes, adult special programs (ESL, GED, and literacy), child care, classes for adults with disabilities, driver education, sports, continuing education, community schools, and early childhood family education programs (Seppanen & Heifetz, 1988).

Federal Policies

The Minnesota sites are unique among the schools participating in this project, because they do not receive Federal Chapter 1 funds. The only source of Federal funding for the Partnership for School Success program in Anwatin and Northeast has been the use of special education funds for purchasing equipment, computers and software to be used by special needs students.

Research Design

Research Focus

The focus of the PATHS teams at Anwatin and Northeast is to examine the effects of the specific interventions designed by the team on improving communication between home and school.

Data Collection Strategies

During the 1991-92 school year, the Anwatin and Northeast facilitator collected data on each school's environment. Information on school demographics, parent-community involvement activities, and the community context of the school were compiled. In addition to these data, the facilitator interviewed both principals about the school mission and policies related to parent involvement. The interviews illustrated the principals' differing approaches to supporting and integrating the PATHS program into the larger parent involvement goals at the school.

Like the other action research sites, the Anwatin and Northeast administered a set of surveys on home-school partnerships. These surveys illuminated parent, teacher, and school staff attitudes towards family involvement and school climate. The surveys were designed and analyzed by the University of Minnesota.

For the 1992-93 school year, the action research team will be responsible for gathering data on the implementation and initial assessment of the program. Implementation will be documented through PATHS meeting notes and decisions made by the PATHS team. The data will be enhanced by journals kept by the facilitator and other select members of the PATHS team. Other strategies for capturing the implementation of the program will include curricular materials, descriptions of training activities (if any), and other materials developed by PATHS members. Formulation of other strategies depends largely upon the specific interventions designed by the PATHS teams (to be decided in the 1992-93 school year).

The beginning assessment of the program will be conducted through a series of interviews and surveys of those parents, students, and teachers who are impacted by the program interventions. The surveys will be designed collaboratively by PATHS team members and off-site facilitators in Boston. The purpose of the surveys is to ascertain the impact of the program interventions on improving communication between school and home. Interviews with families, students, and teachers will be conducted by off-site facilitators from Boston. To determine the impact of the program interventions on student achievement, data from student records and interviews with teachers will be collected. Specific data collection instruments and strategies are in the process of being designed to analyze the impact of program implementation on communication.

ANWATIN AND NORTHEAST MIDDLE SCHOOLS

PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)

ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To examine the effects of PATHS interventions on school-home communication and on levels of parent-child interactions.

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Measure effectiveness of program for PATHS participants	Interviews with PATHS participants	TBA		
2. Measure impact of specific interventions created by PATHS on school-home communication	Interviews with parents, teachers, and students Focus groups with students	TBA		
3. Measure impact of specific PATHS interventions on student achievement	Student records Teacher interviews	TBA		

Atenville Elementary School
Rt.2 Box 28
Harts, WV 25524
Phone: (304) 855-3173
Fax: (304) 824-7947
Grades: K-6
Enrollment: 209

Parent Partnership: Parents as Educational Partners

Action Research Project: What are the effects of home visits, a phone tree and family center on school-home communication and on levels of family involvement in school activities?

Action Research Team Members

Parents
Darlene Farley
Lina Ramey
Leah Shelton

Teachers
Debbie Dingess
Jacqueline McCann
Lyle Ramey

Principal
Darlene Dalton

Facilitator
Stanley Maynard

ATENVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Parents as Educational Partners

School and Community Context

The Atenville Elementary School population consists of students in the kindergarten through sixth grade. Total enrollment for the 1990-91 school year was 209 students. The student body is 99% Caucasian. The majority of students in the school come from low-income homes and are descendants of people who have lived in the Appalachian mountains for generations. Forty percent of students' families qualify for AFDC and sixty-one percent are eligible for free lunch. Close to half of the students qualify for Chapter 1 services.

The children are supported by a team of 16 professional staff members, 10 support personnel, a part-time parent coordinator and a cadre of parent volunteers and community members. The current principal of the school, Darlene Dalton, is a former third grade science teacher at the school. The former principal, Peggy Adkins, is now Assistant Superintendent of schools for Lincoln County. Adkins is the first woman in the history of the county to hold this position.

The school is situated in a very rural area of West Virginia, approximately two hours drive from the capital. Set in the foothills of Appalachia, the school consists of three buildings. The main building, which dates to 1956, houses eleven classrooms and a family center, two offices, a multi-purpose room and three restrooms. The annexes, constructed in the 1960's, house additional classrooms and a computer lab. The school yard includes blacktop and grassy play areas. Principal Dalton has introduced an environmental theme to the school. A weather station and an outdoor herb garden are used for instruction. The outdoor classroom extends across the street to a wetland area leased from a local businessman. Vandalism is a rare occurrence at Atenville. School facilities, except for the wooden annex, are described as being in good condition.

Summary of First-Year Progress

The Atenville Elementary School's Parents as Educational Partners Program is building new opportunities for teachers, families and community members to work together for the success of all of its students. It is supported in part by IRE funds which provided $10,500 for the first year of the two and a half year grant. A portion of these funds are being used to support the cost of the project facilitator, Stanley Maynard.

The hub of the parent program is a multi-leveled communication network aimed at increasing positive interaction between home and school. The school believes that clear and consistent communication between home and school boosts children's learning. The components of the network are (i) a school-based and off-site family center, (ii) a part-time parent coordinator, (iii) phone tree, and (iii) a home visitor program. These activities were initiated in Year One of the three-year project.

Family Center

The family center, which officially opened in September 1991, is housed in a former classroom. The Center is the site of parent training sessions, school council meetings, tutoring sessions for students, and kindergarten registration, and serves as office space for the parent coordinator. Plans are underway to establish satellite family centers within the community. The first satellite center, which opened in the summer of 1992, is located in a local church.

Parent Coordinator

In December 1991, a part-time parent coordinator was hired to staff the center and to coordinate the school's parent involvement program. The parent coordinator has long been active in the school as a parent and is well-known in the community. The parent coordinator's responsibilities include scheduling and planning parent workshops, distributing books and materials to parents, coordinating the parent phone tree and making home visits. During the first year of the project, the parent coordinator also has played an active role in data collection.

Parent Phone Tree

The purpose of the phone tree is two-fold: to help the school communicate with parents more effectively and to create a system by which parents' needs are regularly communicated to school staff. The phone tree is comprised of one representative from each of seven school attendance areas. Two of the women who applied but were not selected for the parent coordinator position now assist with home visits.

Phone tree coordinators call parents once or twice monthly to update them on upcoming events and record their concerns. Phone tree members keep logs to record the number and content of calls. They meet monthly to set a calling plan for the upcoming month and to discuss parent concerns with the principal and parent coordinator. Strategies for strengthening the program also are discussed, e.g. how to tailor a networking pattern in residential areas where there are few cars or phones.

Home Visitor Program

While the Family Center and parent coordinator seek to help to make school more family friendly, the phone tree and home visiting program reach out to families in their own homes. In its first year, Atenville's home visitor team consisted of the parent coordinator and six parent volunteers. One member of the home visitor team is also a phone tree coordinator. Home visitors received one day of training conducted by the project facilitator. A total of thirty visits were conducted during the 1991-92 school year. The families were selected through a random sample of all children in the school (approximately 30 families). For the 1992-93 school year, the principal, parent coordinator, and the project facilitator will choose families who seem to be least involved in the school and/or whose children are struggling academically.

Home visits were conducted in the first year for the purpose of administering common survey instruments. The common instruments surveyed families' attitudes towards school climate, teacher competence in children's learning, and their own involvement at home and at school. Home visits were made by a team of two parents. While one parent asked the survey questions, the other took notes on parents' body language and the overall home climate.

Research Committee

In November 1991, Atenville convened a research team to provide direction for the program and to study the program effects on student achievement, school-home communication, and family and community involvement. The action research team is comprised of three professional staff members, two parents, the parent coordinator and project facilitator. The team has met monthly since December 1991.

From the outset, the team has tailored its research plan to meet the unique needs of the school community. The team's decision to administer the common survey instruments in person is an example of its ownership of the project. The team anticipated that administering instruments in person, rather than mailing them out, would help gain in-depth information on families' needs. In addition, the team was concerned that phrasing of questions in absolutes would alienate or confuse parents, e.g., "Name two things which you (families) regularly do which have a **positive** influence on children's learning." By administering the surveys in person, they hoped to encourage families to respond based on their own experiences and values.

The team has used information and notes from the written survey and on-going phone contact with parents to shape the direction of their program. For example, from home visits, the school learned that many families lack adequate transportation to the school. This knowledge encouraged them to establish satellite family centers which are more accessible to families living in distant hollows. The school reports that

information from the home visits also has given them clues on how to improve communication with families. The majority of families which were surveyed reported that teacher-initiated contact was infrequent. To address this, the school is investigating ways of encouraging teachers to call families more regularly.

First Year Learnings

At different points during the year, the school has come head to head with some harder issues of building family and community involvement. The opening of the Family Center was delayed because the school lacked funds to purchase furniture and supplies. As funds became available and program expanded, new problems surfaced. The parent coordinator found herself overburdened with new responsibility and brought this to the attention of the research team. The team addressed the problem by delegating some of her program responsibilities among team members.

The team realized earlier in the year that although home visits may be valuable, they also are time consuming. Homes in rural West Virginia are spread far apart. This meant home visitor teams frequently had to travel long distances. Many of the roads are in poor condition and during the winter months frequently inaccessible. As winter wore on and surveys still weren't completed, the team discussed the problems which they were having in increasing the number of home visits. They decided that while the team approach was time consuming, what was lost in time was made up in quality and content of information.

Confidentiality of information surfaced as another critical issue. The team felt strongly that any information gathered from home visits and phone tree must be kept completely confidential. This loomed as a major challenge given the size of the community and its reputation for being a place where, in the words of the parent coordinator, "Everybody knows everybody's else's business." To help prevent leaks of information, the parent coordinator held special sessions with phone tree coordinators and home visitors on issues of confidentiality. The project facilitator anticipates issues of confidentiality to resurface around the school's use of portfolio assessment.

As coordinating body for the program, the research committee faced its own dilemmas. Early program activity drew heavily on parent volunteers and on the needs of families. However, parent members felt excluded from participation in team meetings because they couldn't follow the discussion. Consequently, the team decided to make meetings more "family friendly," by outlawing use of technocratic educational jargon which parents might not understand.

Research Design

Atenville is interested in examining the combined effects of its communication network on student learning and behavior, level and quality of school-home communication, and levels of family involvement in school-related activities. While the program will reach all the students in the school, the team has chosen the combined classes of first, second and third graders as its research sample.

It has designed a multi-pronged research strategy to measure effects.

Data Collected 1991-92

- School Profile
- Teacher Home School Partnership Survey
- Parent Home School Partnership Surveys
- Student Home School Partnership Survey
- Program Assessment Questionnaires completed by facilitator and all action research team members
- Parent Coordinator/Project Facilitator Notes on Implementation

Home School Partnership Survey: Parents and school staff were surveyed during 1991-92 school year with regards to their perceptions of school climate, their own involvement in children's learning and perceived levels of involvement of parents and teachers. A significant number of parents reported school-initiated communication to be infrequent. In response to this finding, the school will increase the level of contact with parents through increases in home visits, telephone contact and written correspondence.

Changes in Student Achievement and Behavior

a. Portfolio Assessment
b. Student Scrapbook

The effects on student achievement and behavior will be measured through school records and individual portfolio assessment. In the 1992 school year, the school will begin portfolio assessment for every student in the school. While the actual content will vary from student to student, every portfolio will include the following: standardized test scores, attendance records, discipline records, teacher notes on interpersonal skills; written, audio or video records of students' work. Teachers will be trained in portfolio assessment during an in-service training during the summer of 1992. One of the issues to be discussed is how to involve students and families in decisions around portfolio content.

Changes in School-Home Communication

a. Common survey instruments
b. Program assessment questionnaires

Changes in the nature of school-home communication will be measured through common survey instruments and program participant questionnaires. Parents and school staff were surveyed during 1991-92 school year with regards to their perceptions of school climate, their own involvement in children's learning and perceived levels of involvement of parents and teachers. The surveys will be readministered in the fall of 1994. The program questionnaires, to be developed in fall of 1992, will be completed by home visitors, phone tree coordinators and families of the student research sample. The questionnaires will record frequency of school initiated and family initiated contact, and participants' perceptions of the content of the communication and its influence on school activities or family behavior.

Project Documentation

a. Record-keeping by parent coordinator, project facilitator.

Both parent coordinator and the project facilitator will keep records on program implementation, including records on the selection of home visitors, frequency and content of visit and on-going support of home visitors. Program participant questionnaires will provide supplementary material on program implementation.

Policy Context

Atenville's Parents as Educational Partners Program is developing in the context of increased policy emphasis on parent involvement at the school, county, state and Federal level. The following section will identify a few policy developments which have the potential to influence the program.

School Policy

Atenville Elementary School's 1991-92 Mission Statement states that the school "shares with the community the responsibility for the education of all students so that they will be prepared to become contributing members of a rapidly changing world."

The "Parents as Educational Partners" project description describes the goals and objectives of the parent and community involvement as follows:

> to improve parent and school communications, to increase parent attendance and meetings and activities, increase the quality and quantity of parent involvement at home and at school, increase students' level of self-esteem, their average daily attendance, the percentage of students scoring above the 50% percentile on the CTBS tests, decrease the number of discipline referrals, increase the percentage of promotions, decrease parent and student anxiety about school and school events, and improve parenting skills.

The school's emphasis on more comprehensive forms of parent involvement is relatively new. Prior to 1989, the school efforts to increase family involvement focused on the recruitment of parent volunteers. The school's earlier efforts to expand "the quality and the quantity of parent involvement" were stymied by the absence of a formal plan and adequate funding.

The school's emphasis on parent involvement is beginning to influence other aspects of school policy. The school now has a policy which gives teachers a daily in-school planning period. The planning period is made possible through the help of parent volunteers are responsible for staffing lunch and recreational periods (under the supervision of staff aides). The school's attempt to give teachers an in-school planning period was stymied in previous years due to limited number of staff.

County Policy

There appear to be efforts underway to strengthen Lincoln County policies on parent involvement. The Lincoln County Parent Involvement Policy requires that each school organize an active parent-teacher association. In addition, each school advisory council must annually appoint one member to serve on a district-wide county educational advisory council. The county advisory council's role is to make recommendations for the county's improvement plan for educational excellence.

In 1992, Lincoln county developed and adopted a comprehensive policy on "At-Risk Students." The policy states that "traditional school/home/community relationships must be reconfigured" to pave the way for new forms of "collaboration between families, social service agencies and communities." Programmatic initiatives encouraged under the policy include a parent school for parents grades K-4. The parent school would provide parents with workshops on helping their children at school and at home. Funding to implement the policy is not yet secure. The superintendent has identified Chapter 1 as a possible source of funds for the parent program.

State Policy

In 1988, the West Virginia Board of Education ruled that every county in the state should adopt a parent involvement policy. According to state law, the county policy should be aimed at increasing overall "awareness, support and understanding of school/county goals," specifically the "cooperative responsibility" for improved student achievement and home-school-community relations.

The law urges counties to "recognize its responsibility to all families including parents who work outside the home, divorced parents, and families of minority race and language." To help address the needs of diverse families, each county is required to conduct a needs assessment, "provide training for parents, teachers and administrators and develop an on-going two-way communication system that includes feedback mechanisms for parents and school staff." (West Virginia Board of Education, Chapter 18A, Series 11A, Policy 2200).

Federal Policy

In the face of diminishing district funds, Federal funds can serve as an important source of funds for Atenville's parent involvement program. During 1991-92, Chapter 1 funds supported two Chapter 1 teachers and close to forty percent of the salary of the parent coordinator. During 1991-92, the school qualified for Chapter 1 school-wide project status for the first time. School-wide project status will give the school the flexibility to use Chapter 1 funds for school-wide parent involvement activities which include the parent center, phone tree, and home visitor project.

Some Emerging Policy Issues

Confidentiality has surfaced as an important policy issue in the project's first year. Early on, the school recognized that the community's acceptance of the project depended a great deal on its trust that information would be kept confidential. Consequently, school policy requires that information gathered by the home visitors and by phone tree coordinators be kept strictly confidential. The training of home visitors emphasizes confidentiality. The school policy on confidentiality of family information supplements a district policy which prohibits anyone but employees of the Board to have access to permanent school records. The home visitor information is not considered part of a child's permanent record.

The presence of parents in the school has given the school increased flexibility to offer teachers daily in-school planning time. While the planning time is always needed, it is particularly critical in a school such as Atenville, which is encouraging teachers to take an increased leadership role in the development of curriculum and in reaching out to parents.

The Atenville policy has caught the attention of other teachers in the district. A Supreme Court case has been brought by a select group of teachers from other schools against the Lincoln County Board of Education. County policy requires schools to give teachers daily planning time but does not specify whether the planning time take place during the course of the instructional day. As described above, Atenville is offering teachers in-school planning time with the help of parent volunteers. Teachers from other schools in the county have claimed that in-school planning time should be county-wide.

ATENVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)
ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To examine the effects of home visits, phone tree and family center on school-home communication and on levels of family involvement in school activities. (Sample: 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders and their families)

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Compile child portfolios for each 1st, 2nd and 3rd grader	Attendance record Co-curricular activities Discipline record Scrapbook	Darlene Dalton Lyle Ramey	Sept-June 1992	June 1992
2. Compile family portfolios for each family of 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders	Home visitors records School involvement record Communication records Phone tree log Letters, Memos Questionnaires for "visited" families	Darlene Farley	Sept-June 1992	June 1992
3. Compile School Portfolio	Atmosphere Overall academic achievement, parent involvement, school recognition and presentations	Darlene Farley Lyle Ramey Cheryl Dingess	Sept-June 1992	June 1992

Fairfield Court Elementary School
2510 Phaup Street
Richmond, VA 23222
Phone: (804) 780-4639
Grades: Pre K-5
Enrollment: 569

Parent Partnership: The Excellent Beginnings Project

Action Research Project: What are the effects of structured home visits on parental self-esteem, parental involvement and on the academic success of children?

Action Research Team Members

Parents

Gloria Bowles
Linda Cash
Pamela Fuller
Trudy Hamilton
Essie Miller
Cassandra Peebles
Dorothy Boyd
Sharon Dove
Ellen Gay
Jacqueline Lee
Loretta Mitchell
Esther Taylor
Anne Truelove

Teachers

Ernestine Bennett
JoAnn Brunson
Elsie Fields
Daisy H. Douglas
Betty Jenkins
Sylvia Robinson
Delores Brunson
Gloria Coleman
Verlestine Holmes
Sandra Hurt
F.G. Neylan
Venita Vaughan
Joan Wilson

Parent Educators

Sharon Austin
Sarah Cole
Marsha Johnson
Ernestine Brunson
Jessie Jenkins
Mary Smith
Vivian Walker

Other

Russell Busch, Administrator
Warren Griffin, Volunteer
Marsha Irby, Guidance Counselor
Willie Munford, Astoria Beneficial Club
Ron Robertson, Project Director
Diane Simon, Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University
Elizabeth York, Retired Principal

Principal
Carolyn Spurlick

Facilitator
Virgie Binford

Fairfield Court Elementary School: The Excellent Beginnings Project

The Excellent Beginnings Project at Fairfield Court Elementary School is a parent-involvement program built around four primary components: a home visiting team, a school-based parent center, a classroom-based parent volunteer program, and a mentoring project involving students from a local high school. All four represent a combined effort to encourage the participation of Fairfield Court parents in their children's education and increase the level of academic achievement among the children of those parents being served.

School and Community Context

In 1991, the Plan for Social Excellence, a private, New York based foundation, awarded a three year grant to Fairfield Court Elementary School. The school is one of three projects which received funds under the foundation's Excellent Beginnings project. The project involves a partnership between the Fairfield Court Elementary School, the John F. Kennedy High School, the Virginia Commonwealth University and community volunteers. Project objectives include the development of a personalized child development program, a comprehensive parent training program, and a social service referral system for children and families.

Funds from the Institute for Responsive Education help to support the cost of project facilitator Virgie Binford. Dr. Binford, like other project facilitators, is responsible for helping to coordinate Fairfield Court's parent involvement program and the action research study of its effects on children's learning.

The Fairfield Court Elementary School is located in the middle of two low-income public housing projects predominantly inhabited by single-parent families. It is the mission of Fairfield Court's Excellent Beginnings project to be responsive to this population, as the program's structure is rooted firmly in the belief that successful families will in turn yield successful students.

Total enrollment in the Fairfield Court Elementary school is 530 students from preschool to grade 5, 99.5% of whom are African-American and all of whom speak English. It is unknown how many of the students at Fairfield Court are receiving AFDC or WIC, but an estimated 91.6% are recipients of the free lunch program and 2.8% are on a reduced price lunch program. Average daily attendance at the school for the 1990-91 academic year was approximately 93%.

School personnel include one principal, one vice principal, 24 regular classroom teachers, one special education teacher, 13 teachers' aides (parent educators), and 4 custodians. Each classroom has one teacher and every two classes

are provided with one parent educator. Parent educators spend half of their time as classroom aides within the school and the other half providing outreach services to parents in the form of home visits. Support service personnel, including psychologists, speech pathologists, and music teachers, are also employed on a part-time basis to assist teachers and students in the learning process.

Physical facilities at the school are adequate and include a cafeteria and media center. Classrooms are equipped with various teaching aides and audio-visual resources are available at the media center to be checked out as needed. The school also provides a multi-purpose center for group activities involving faculty, staff, and students and one room has been set aside for the Excellent Beginnings project parent center, which has access to a recreation area for group training sessions, self-esteem workshops, and GED classes. Unfortunately, the parent center is short of needed furniture and materials.

Summary of First Year Progress

As a former Follow Through school funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Fairfield Court Elementary School's Excellent Beginnings Project was already in place prior to the launching of the Action Research process in Fall, 1991. As a result, its Action Research Team was not created to study a newly implemented project, but rather to research the effects of a program that had already been planned within the Fairfield Court community. IRE is supporting the cost of the project facilitator, Virgie Binford, and project secretary, Margaret Walker. All remaining funds are supplied by the Project For Social Excellence.

The Action Research Team which, at last count, included approximately 26 members, meets monthly and is made up predominantly of teachers, parent educators, parents, administrators, and community volunteers. The principal is also involved as is the facilitator, and within the team six separate task-oriented subcommittees have been formed regarding planning, evaluation, dissemination, data collection, public relations, and parent involvement. By the time the team gathered for its first meeting in the fall of 1991, it was decided that the focus of its efforts would be on a population of 200 kindergarten and first grade students split into eight groups of 25 (four at each level).

Over the three-year period of the Action Research project, the team intends to chart the progress of this study sample through records of attendance and academic achievement, through informal feedback from teachers and parents regarding changes in the involvement, behavior, and self-esteem of these students, and through additional measures such as writing, art work, and other creative endeavors. However, while the project's intention is to create a positive change in the overall academic achievement

of the students in the study sample, the focus of the research itself is on parents receiving home-visits.

Focus: Home Visits

Building on the premise that a positive change in the self-esteem of parents will yield further parental involvement and thus a positive change in the academic progress of children, home-visitors seek to reach out to all parents of children in the study sample through the one-to-one contact of structured home visits. This agenda is strengthened by the fact that the project's facilitator, Virgie Binford, has long been involved in national efforts to study and promote self-esteem.

Home visits are made every Tuesday and Thursday on a biweekly basis by parents and parent educators to distribute home-learning activities, foster teaching and learning behaviors within the home, encourage parental participation in school activities and the Parent Center, and elicit feedback from parents on the Excellent Beginnings Project. Each visit is documented by home visitors and handed in to Parent Educator Coordinator Barbara Giles at monthly Action Team meetings. Home Visitor training meetings are also conducted on a monthly basis by Barbara Giles and Virgie Binford.

Teachers, beyond their regular classroom duties, assist parent educators in the development of home-learning activities to be utilized on home-visits, plan activities for parent volunteers in the classroom, keep attendance records of parent volunteerism, and monitor the effectiveness of home-visits and parent involvement activities on the students in the study sample.

Publicity

In January, an article by a parent volunteer on self-esteem and her involvement in Excellent Beginnings was published in a local newspaper circulated to area churches, organizations, and institutions within the Richmond metropolitan area. During that same month, the committee succeeded in attracting two television stations and one newspaper to cover a Saturday Pancake Breakfast/Priorities Session held at the school. The Breakfast, a concerted effort of the principal, faculty, Astoria Beneficial Club (a civic organization of men) and Excellent Beginnings Project members, drew over 200 parents, 50 community volunteers, the fire chief, and representatives from the State of Virginia's General Assembly. Needs assessments were distributed by team members and filled out by parents attending the Breakfast in order to obtain an overall picture of issues of concern to parents.

Writing Activities and Publications

In February, a self-esteem booklet entitled "Strategies for Building Self-Esteem" was published by parents and parent educators. An autograph party to kick off this publication and a good deal of publicity generated so much interest in the booklet that a California-based magazine on urban family issues requested information on Excellent Beginnings and its publication to produce an article in its magazine. A similar booklet on positive discipline strategies has since been proposed by action research team members to facilitate positive parent-child communication.

Throughout the year, parents and team members were encouraged to keep journals related to their experiences within the project and their perceptions of home visits and parent involvement activities provided by the school. In addition, a monthly newsletter was sent to all parents of children within the school to keep them informed of the school's progress and a large end-of-the-year scrapbook was produced by the team to summarize the year's activities.

Workshops

Monthly self-esteem workshops were carried out by the facilitator of the project for faculty, staff, and parents, and, in March, positive discipline workshops for parents were held in a local community pre-school center.

Parent Volunteers

Every one to two months those parents with the highest number of hours served in the classroom are honored as "Parents of the Month," given corsages, and taken out to lunch at a restaurant of their choice by the facilitator of the project. In April, this idea was expanded when five parents were additionally selected, based on their overall assistance in achieving project goals and objectives, to receive tickets to a Saturday luncheon meeting sponsored by a local sorority. According to Virgie Binford, such benefits elevated interest in program participation at a higher level than had previously been the case.

Home Visitors

Teachers and parent educators involved in the project have indicated that they believe that home-visiting activities have been successful in raising the self-esteem of parents. Parents have become involved in assisting their children with homework, accompanying children on field trips, assisting community organizations such as the Food Bank, and, in one particular case, speaking publicly on behalf of the program and the children involved. In a sampling of parent journals provided in facilitator Virgie Binford's April monthly report, this change in parent self-esteem is evident.

One parent wrote: "...what I learn I already had it in me, but I needed someone to help me bring it out in words and expression."

Photographs and parent commentary, both a part of a year-end scrapbook provided for our review, also supported our general sense that parent involvement is increasing as a direct result of the positive effects the project's home visits and parent involvement activities have had on self-esteem.

Research Design

The research design for the 1992-93 school year is as follows:

Home Visitors. Home visitors will continue to visit homes on a monthly basis to encourage parent participation in school activities, address questions/concerns of parents, and assist in creating a positive home-learning environment. As was done in the first year of the project, documentation of home visits by home visitors will also continue and will be turned in to Barbara Giles, coordinator of parent educators, at monthly Action Research Team meetings. In addition, workshops involving outside consultants will be created as requested to address questions and concerns of home visitors and monthly home visitor training meetings staffed by Barbara Giles and Facilitator Virgie Binford will continue as part of the program.

Parent Journals. A new effort at collecting parent journals will also be part of the 1992-93 research process. While parents were encouraged to keep journals during the study's first year, they were generally an optional piece of the project and were not collected on a regular basis. In recent conversations with Virgie Binford, it was agreed that parent journal-keeping should become a more central part of the process, as those collected thus far have provided positive examples of ongoing changes in parent self-esteem. To assure that this happens, it was decided that a sample of five to six of those parents receiving home visits will be asked to keep journals regarding the home visiting program and its perceived effects on them and their children. These journals will in turn be collected on a periodic basis by parent educators to document evidence of elevation in self-esteem. In order to focus on the effects of the home-visiting program alone, however, it was also decided that journal-keepers should represent those parents not yet involved in any other aspect of the Excellent Beginnings Project. In this way, it is hoped that these journals will provide primary data on the home visiting program's effects on parent self-esteem as well as accountability for home-visiting efforts.

Self-Esteem Questionnaires. Another method of measuring parent self-esteem to be implemented will be self-esteem questionnaires, distributed at the beginning, middle, and end of the 1992-93 school year. It has not yet been decided whether these

questionnaires will poll the entire population of parents being visited or specifically those keeping journals. In addition, tangible methods of measuring changes in self-esteem will have to be agreed upon by the team before these questionnaires are drawn up.

Both the decision to create a sample of journal-keeping parents and distribute self-esteem questionnaires will be introduced to the Action Research Team.

Program Evaluation

Common Questionnaires. To assess the effects of the home-visiting program, common questionnaires (to be developed jointly by Center staff and Fairfield Court's Action Research Team) will be distributed at the end of the 1992-93 school year to parents involved in the program and the teachers of their children. Parent questionnaires will elicit general feedback on the program, if it was useful and how, and parents' perceptions of its effects on their children. Teacher questionnaires, to be distributed to those teachers of students in the study sample, will focus on their perceptions of the program's effects on these students and its influence on parent involvement in their classrooms.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents, and the children in the sample, conducted by members of the team, will also be used to assess the program's effects, as will formal records of students' progress and parent journals collected throughout the year.

Involvement. Information on the participation of visited families in school-related activities, what these activities were, and each parent's role in them, will also be reviewed to additionally assess the program's success in increasing parent involvement.

Policy Context

School Parent Involvement Policy

In its mission statement, the Fairfield Court Elementary School states that "it will work as a community to provide an environment conducive to the teaching/learning process" by offering "meaningful educational experiences that encourage and expect each student to excel to his/her highest ability; fostering positive attitudes for learning and toward becoming life long learners; encouraging creative, critical, and analytical thinking; preparing students to become productive citizens beginning today; and encouraging practice for success."

The Fairfield Court Elementary School has renewed its commitment to boosting students' academic and social success through home-school-partnerships through participation in the Plan for Social Excellence's "Excellent Beginnings" program. Project funds are being used to support a comprehensive parent involvement program.

District Parent Involvement Policy

The Richmond Public Schools require each parent to sign a parent contract in which the parent agrees to "assist the child in helping students achieve by exhibiting a positive attitude toward their child's school, maintaining contact with teachers, and teaching their child to be honest, trustworthy and responsible and participating in school activities."

State Parent Involvement Policy

A recent benefits policy developed by the Virginia Department of Education provides all employees of the Commonwealth up to eight hours per year of paid leave to serve as volunteers in local public schools or to support their children's education. Under this policy, employees may take leave to serve as school volunteers, to meet with a teacher or administrator concerning the children over which they have custody, or to attend a school function. Part-time employees of the state can take up to four hours per year.

Federal Policy Context

Fairfield Court Elementary School receives funds from two key Federal programs which have the potential to support its parent involvement program. In 1992, the school was granted school-wide project status under the Federal Chapter 1 program. Since 1988, the law allows schools with at least 75% percent low-income students to use their Chapter 1 funds for school-wide projects. For many years, the percentage of low-income students remained just below seventy-five percent and disqualified the school from using its funds school-wide. As a result of its new status, the school has crafted a plan which targets funds for school-wide activities such as teacher training day, the school family center activities and the home visitor project. In addition, Fairfield Court receives Head Start funds. The Head Start program takes a comprehensive approach to parent involvement. The school principal reports that the presence of Head Start is a positive influence on parent involvement in the school. Parent activities initiated either under Head Start or by the school, e.g., parent training activities, and family center activities, are offered to all the parents in the school.

The home visitor project was started as part of the Federally funded Follow Through program. The Follow Through program is a twenty-five year old comprehensive early childhood program (K-3) designed to help children sustain the gains made by Head Start. Follow Through funding for the Richmond Public Schools ended in 1987. However, the district provides in-kind support for the continuation of the program at Fairfield Court.

FAIRFIELD COURT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)

ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To study the effects of structured home-visits on parental self-esteem, parental involvement and on the academic success of children.
(Sample: Children in grades k-1 (1991-92) and their families)

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Parent educators keep records of home visits	Ira Gorden Educational Model Forms	Parent educators Barbara Giles	Sept-June	On-going
2. Visited parents keep journals	Theme books	Parents/Barbara Giles	Sept-June	
3. Administer questionnaire to visited parents	To be developed	Team	June 1993 June 1994	
4. Keep records of visited families involvement in school activities	School record	Team	On-going	
5. Interview participating parents, teachers and students	Focus groups	Team/IRE staff		
6. Keep achievement and behavioral records of students in sample	Academic records, Teacher reports? other	Team		

Early Education Program
Ferguson-Florissant Schools
Florissant, Missouri
Phone: (314) 831-8798
Fax: (314) 831-1525
Grades: 0-5
Enrollment: 2200

Parent Partnership: Boxes for Babes

Action Research Project: What is the impact of Boxes activities and home visits on parent-child interactions?

Action Research Team Members

Parent Educators
Donna Bubenik
Jean Manning
Linda Scorfina
Pat Teich

Project Director
Marion Wilson

Facilitator
Carol Klass

FERGUSON-FLORISSANT SCHOOL DISTRICT:
Boxes for Babes Home Visitor Program

Summary of First Year Progress

The Boxes for Babes project is an early childhood intervention designed to assist families with the responsibilities of being their children's first teachers. The Boxes for Babes Program is funded in part by the Institute for Responsive Education, which provided $7,800 in the first year of the two and a half year project. A portion of funds are being used to support the cost of the project facilitator, Carol Klass.

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is guided by the philosophy that parents are the first teachers of their children. To help all families fulfill this role, the PAT program provides classes, materials, and resource people to parents with children 0-3 years of age. All families are invited to participate, although the program is primarily geared towards parents having children for the first time (for more information on the PAT program, see the policy context section of this chapter). Building on the Parents as Teachers model, Ferguson-Florissant has created a series of activity boxes which contain different toys and materials for parents to use with their children. The idea behind Boxes for Babes is to foster interactions between parents and their children which are fundamental in supporting language and communication development and preventing language delay. The intervention is aimed at families with children who are at-risk of language/communicative delay.

Parent educators are professionals interested in helping other families with children. In addition to their formal qualifications, they are required to undergo a five-day orientation training by the PAT national center to familiarize them with the PAT program and with the specifics of conducting home visits. Throughout the course of the year, parent educators have four more training sessions. The Boxes for Babes program recruited six parent educators including the facilitator, Carol Klass, to form their action research team. Unlike the other sites, the Boxes team does not have parents (who are not parent educators) on the team. The team plans to solicit parental input by holding two focus group meetings with parents in their second year.

In the early months of the project, the project team refined their primary focus and identified their target population. They selected 70 out of 200 families from PAT enrollment lists. They also worked out the details of who is to serve on the project team and developed an action plan for the remainder of the 1991-92 school year.

The team decided to work with 70 families with children -- ages 10-24 months -- through the life of the project. In the first part of the project, the team decided to work with 20 families and add cohorts of that size until they reach their total. Using

Gerald Mahoney's Behavioral Rating Scale, parent educators determined who would participate. The criterion of selection was non-appropriate parent-child behavior. They decided that 50% of the target population should be teen parents. Home visitors keep records of each visit to the families.

While the project team did not meet their anticipated total of families to be visited, they do plan on meeting their target number in the Fall of 1992 with the addition of a new cohort.

Of the total population, a smaller sample (six families per cohort) was chosen to be videotaped to determine what impact Boxes for Babes is having on parent-child interaction over the course of the project. In the first year, two videotapes were completed. In addition to the videotaping, the facilitator, Carol Klass, interviewed four families. The team has also begun to use baby biographies as a means of recording parents' observations regarding their children's development between visits. The project also completed one interview with a parent educator.

The Boxes for Babes project has had some difficulty in reaching teen parents on a consistent basis. In some cases, crowded home conditions made the visit more difficult. Often, the parents were not home or did not keep appointments with parent educators. These problems resulted in fewer home visits (on average one to two visits). Parent educators kept contact with these parents mainly through their weekly group meetings at the high school. The school district has made day care available at the high school starting next year and, consequently, parent educators will implement their interventions at the weekly group meeting for teen parents since their children will be there.

The project has begun planning for district implementation of Boxes for Babes for another cohort of 20 families with children ages 10-16 months in the fall of 1992.

Policy Context

District Context

The Boxes for Babes project is implemented at the district level (unlike the other action-research projects, which are school-based). The Ferguson-Florissant school district consolidates eleven contiguous municipalities in the Greater Metropolitan St. Louis area, serving over 10,000 students and having an average per pupil expenditure of $5,639. Under a desegregation mandate, the Ferguson-Florissant

school district has incorporated two small school districts that have a 40% African-American population, a smaller Asian population, and the remainder Caucasian. The district is predominantly middle-class, with some poor and working-class neighborhoods.

The Boxes for Babes project is part of a district-wide, multi-faceted early education program for helping parents of young children. The early education program is one of the oldest early education programs in the country and a pioneer in integrating special education services with early childhood education. This project extends a new strand of the Missouri Parents as Teachers project. The district provides assistance to parents about registration in kindergarten, education programs for parents with toddlers, and the LINK program, which connects parents with other parents and with community resources. The district also screens toddlers and preschoolers with respect to speech and language development, operates three Child Development Centers which combine day care with social and educational development activities, and conducts a Saturday School preschool program which involves providing education in home and in school for four-year-olds.

To date, the early education program at Ferguson-Florissant provides services to 2,200 families. Part of the success of the program is its ability to draw upon a number of community resources to provide for the emotional and social as well as educational needs of young children. The early childhood program produces a newsletter which is disseminated throughout the school system (including a column targeted to principals). An early childhood committee was formed with teachers, principals, counselors, special education representatives, and Child Development Centers and LINK personnel representatives. Given the links between the early childhood program and the schools, school records for children are begun in the preschool program.

In addition to the newsletter, the early childhood program maintains informational links between public and private schools as well as public agencies. Participation in the community includes referrals for participants, planning, training, and evaluation of community activities, and participation in inter-agency collaborative councils. The program also produces another newsletter which is distributed to every home in the community.

State Context

The state of Missouri has been a leader in comprehensive early childhood education through its Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. In 1984, the Missouri legislature passed the Early Childhood Development Act which provided state funding to local school districts with PAT-like parent education programs. The act specified the establishment of parent education programs with developmental screening to

identify delays in language and speech, hearing, sight, motor skills, and other physical/health problems. The act also enabled districts to contract with other agencies and districts and private organizations to provide these services if they were unable to do so themselves.

The Early Childhood Development Act gave parent education programs the flexibility to provide services through a variety of channels including home visits, group classes, and parent support groups. The Boxes for Babes program, as an extension of PAT, utilizes these channels to reach the more "at-risk" parents who may not find traditional parent education programs responsive to their needs. The Boxes for Babes expands the PAT program's home visitor component by developing specific activity booklets and materials (including toys). The parent educators in the Boxes program are trained and certified through PAT, and families to be served by the program are selected from PAT enrollment lists.

The PAT program has established a national center in St. Louis to disseminate information and research about the success and limits of their parent education program as well as provide training for parent educators and others interested in starting a PAT program in other states. The national center provided an initial five-day training for the Boxes parent educators and followed up with four more training sessions throughout the year. This gives parent educators a technical background with on-going support.

U.S. Senator Christopher Bond, (R) Missouri, sponsored Federal legislation in the last Congress seeking to implement PAT Programs nationwide. The bill called for the establishment of a Federally-funded national PAT center and support for parent education programs which operate with the same principles as the PAT program. The legislation was not passed; however, several states have adopted PAT programs and received training and technical assistance from the Missouri-based national center. These states include Rhode Island, Texas, Louisiana, Connecticut, California, and Kansas.

In addition to the PAT statute, the state of Missouri also has a parent involvement policy consistent with Chapter 1 amendments of 1988. The Federal amendments require parent involvement in Chapter 1 programs, including (i) planning, design, and implementation of Chapter 1 programs, (ii) annual parent meetings every spring to explain Chapter 1 programs and activities, (iii) individual parent-teacher conferences to inform parents on how they can participate in their children's education, (iv) parent access to school staff and classrooms, (v) providing parents with information on Chapter 1 and parent involvement requirements in an understandable form and language, and (vi) coordinating parent involvement activities with Adult Education Act programs when possible.

The state has responded by providing guidelines to districts on parent involvement. Parents can be involved as volunteers, as policymakers at the school, and as instructors at home (with support materials and training provided by districts and teachers). Parents are entitled to information on planning, design, and implementation of Chapter 1 and on their children's instructional needs, goals, objectives, and progress.

Federal statute also requires an annual assessment of parent involvement activities provided through Chapter 1. The state of Missouri has developed an attitudinal questionnaire to be used by districts for assessing the effectiveness of their parent involvement program. The state also provides for use of parent conferences, training programs, and attendance at parent meetings as measures of parent involvement effectiveness. Funding for parent involvement activities will only be approved if the district complies with the requirements stated above and with those parent involvement goals established through the local school board.

The Boxes for Babes program does not use Chapter 1 funds for its program, but does provide for family support consistent with Chapter 1 parent involvement goals. For example, the Boxes for Babes program gives parents the training and skills for making decisions about their children's education. It also provides the initial experience of being involved in children's learning development at home. As the Boxes program begins to integrate parental input into program development, the program will also have an assessment piece consistent with the spirit of the assessment questionnaire developed by the state.

Research Design

Research Focus

The action research team at Ferguson-Florissant is researching the impact of their Boxes curriculum and home visits on parent-infant interactions. The assumption is that early positive interactions between parents and their infants will offset language and communication delay. Thus, much of their data collection has focused on capturing parent-infant interactions and their impact on infant communication/language development.

Data Collection

During the 1991-92 school year, the action research team gathered extensive data while the intervention was implemented. Using Gerald Mahoney's Behavioral Scale, home visitors recorded parental and infant behavior in their interactions to determine which children were at risk of developmental delay. In addition to the

behavioral scale, home visitors kept records on the content of each visit. The parent educators developed the activity booklets and materials for each box. Every semester new boxes are created to meet the changing needs in development of the children. Parent educators kept written records of their visits. Some home visits were also recorded on videotape by team member Pat Teich.

In addition to capturing the activities during the home visits, data was collected on the reflective process taking place during the action research team meetings. Facilitator Carol Klass reports that "the most powerful process of implementation is the home visit and the parent to parent educator relationship. The power of our team meetings is the self and collaborative reflection of this process." This reflective process is recorded through monthly meeting notes drafted by Klass and submitted to team members to make comments and reflect on decisions/suggestions made during meetings about the obstacles and strategies for implementing this project.

For the 1992-93 school year, the action research team will continue to gather information about program implementation through home visitor records and action research meeting notes. In lieu of monthly reports, Klass will be asked to reflect on general learnings of the project in journal style bi-monthly. The "journals" will be consistent with the format used by other action research sites. Other relevant information about the program, selected by the facilitators, will be submitted to Boston bi-monthly. Also, any training or curriculum materials developed over the course of the year will be collected as well. The facilitator will also make observations of home visits, including four meetings with teen-age parents. Finally, home visitors will be interviewed by Klass.

Beginning assessment of the program's impact on parent-child interactions will include a series of "baby biographies" kept by visited families. These biographies are like portfolios which track progress of infant development between visits. In addition to the biographies, Carol Klass has begun in-depth interviews with six of the visited families. Families will also be videotaped during the course of the project to capture the actual changes in interactions. Notes from action research team meetings also provide data from the home visitors' point of view about specific impact and changes in parent-child interactions.

BOXES FOR BABES
PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)

ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To examine the effects of Boxes activities and home visits on levels of parent-child interactions.
(Sample: Infants 10-24 months old and their families)

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Measures effectiveness of program for home visitors	In-depth interviews with parent educators	Facilitator	On-going	On-going
2. Develop "baby biographies" on progress between visits	Home visitors records "Baby biographies" kept by families	Parent educators Families being visited	On-going	On-going
3. Measure impact of home visitor program on parent-child interactions	Videotapes Parent educator interviews Interviews with visited families	Pat Teich Facilitator	On-going	On-going

Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option School
12302 South State Street
Chicago, IL 60628
Phone: (312) 535-5475
Fax: (312) 535-5483
Grades: 4-8
Enrollment: 547

Parent Partnership: Parents, Teachers & Students United in the Pursuit of Excellence

Action Research Project: What are the effects of the mentoring program on students' self-esteem and academic achievement?

Action Research Team Members

Parents
Randy Alexander

Teachers
Shirley Atkins
Maggie Bates (Assistant)
Mark Jordan
Elizabeth Nesbitt

Principal
Blondean Davis

Facilitator
Elizabeth Allen

GOMPERS FINE ARTS OPTION SCHOOL:
Parents, Teachers and Students United in the Pursuit of Excellence

School and Community Context

The Gompers Fine Arts Option School, named after the American labor leader, is located on Chicago's far southside. The school serves children from the fourth through the eighth grade. All of the 547 children enrolled during the 1990-91 school year are of African-American descent, and 69% are from low-income families. During the same year, the student mobility rate was estimated at 19.3%. On an average day, 94.2% of the student body was in attendance. Five students were retained and two were suspended in 1990-91.

The school staff consists of the principal and the vice principal, 28 regular classroom teachers, three special education teachers, three Chapter 1 teachers and five custodial staff. The general physical environment of the school is excellent. There is one school building which was constructed in 1929 and a playground. All classrooms are being utilized. The teacher's lounge was recently refurnished.

Summary of First Year Progress

The Gompers school introduced its mentoring program in the fall of 1991. The school received a grant of approximately $12,700 from the Institute for Responsive Education in 1991 for its Parent Partnership Program, of which the mentoring project is one part. A portion of funds are being used to support the cost of the project facilitator, Elizabeth Allen. A core team of fourteen mentors have spent a minimum of three hours a week working with students in and outside of classrooms. The goal of the program is to encourage increases in student self-esteem and achievement by providing students with positive role models.

Principal Blondean Davis recruited male mentors through personal invitation and public service announcements in the local media. Twenty businessmen from the local community signed up as the first wave of mentor volunteers. The mentor team includes a historian, an auto repair mechanic, a World War II veteran who is a grandparent, a tailor who is also a minister, a television commentator, a real estate businessman, a public relations specialist, and an environmental overseer.

Mentors have designed their own schedules and approaches to working with students. Dr. Davis assigned each mentor to one classroom. Attempts were made to match mentors' individual strengths and skills with class needs. For example, the

mentor who coordinates the Junior Achievement program was matched with a class of eighth graders who are old enough to participate in the program.

Once in the classroom, mentors worked both individually with students and with small groups of students. The mentor who is a television commentator talks to students about weekly news events. Another mentor worked one-on-one with students in specific subject areas. Students involved in the program have described the role of mentors as more than classroom aides. They can be, in students' words, "peacekeepers," "fathers," "honorable men," and "people who help us as well as teachers."

From the outset of the project, mentors have participated in a wide range of school activities. For example, in January, five mentors were present at school open house for eighth grade students and their parents. Counselors from the area high schools made presentations about their schools' college preparatory curricula. One mentor, who coordinates the Junior Achievement program, described the mentor program and encouraged parents to tap school and community resources to help children make wise choices. Mentors accompanied project facilitator Elizabeth Allen on field trips to acquaint parents with cultural and educational institutions.

- In several instances, mentors have drawn upon current or past job experiences to connect the school with community resources. One mentor who is a historian of African American history assisted the school in coordinating an African American Arts Exhibit. The president of a Century 21 real estate agency purchased copies of John H. Johnson's "Succeeding Against the Odds" for classroom use. Another mentor, the television commentator, arranged to have a panel presentation by local black political leaders filmed directly from the school's library.

Since November 1991, mentors have met monthly. Mentor meetings have been a time to share experiences and discuss strategies. Breakfast meetings have proven to be the best time to meet as a group in that most work day jobs. The meetings, which take place in the school library, are chaired by principal Davis. Project facilitator Allen takes the minutes. Many of the mentors went to high school together. In interviews, several mentors described their participation in the program as an opportunity to rekindle old friendships.

Discussion and decision-making at mentor meetings have spurred program changes as well as school-wide initiatives. A March mentor meeting led to developing new plans and strategies to reach males at the Gompers School. Mentors were finding that there were some topics which were "inappropriate" to discuss in classroom settings, i.e., hygiene, drugs, and gangs. The decision was made to host assemblies for male students only twice monthly.

The first assembly, held in early April, was a group introduction to the mentor program entitled, "Why are we here?" At a subsequent meeting, mentors assessed effectiveness of the new format and discussed how it could be improved, e.g., by making presentations more relevant to the age-group of the audience.

Over the course of the year, mentors have assumed a more central role within the school. In early April, mentors substituted for Chapter 1 teachers participating in an all-day state educational conference. The "teachers for a day" were assigned to the classrooms in which they currently worked as mentors. Teachers designed lesson plans for mentors to carry out. In February, the mentors met with the Local School Council to discuss "joining forces" to acquire a new lunchroom for the school. Four mentors were elected to serve on the Local School Council for the 1992-93 school year.

Research Design

Gompers is testing the hypothesis that participation of caring and significant role models in the school can help boost students' self-esteem and academic achievement. In October 1992, the school convened the action research team to collect data on the implementation of the program and its effects. Members of the action research team were selected by Principal Davis. The action research team is composed of two parents, two teachers, the vice-principal, the principal and the project facilitator. One of the parent team members also serves as a mentor.

The team has met monthly to discuss the progress of the program and to coordinate data collection strategies.

Data Collected in 1991-92

- School-wide data on student achievement and discipline
- School Profile
- Teacher Home-School Partnership Survey (18 Respondents)
- Parent Home-School Partnerships Survey (60 Respondents)
- Program Assessment Questionnaires for mentors, as well as teachers and students directly involved in the program.

The principal reports that the mentoring program has begun to have effects on both student achievement and behavior. The math scores of girls participating in the program jumped 22% in one year. In addition, 1991-92 was the first year without a single in-school fight. The principal attributes the recent safety in the school to the presence of the mentors.

The program assessment questionnaires, jointly devised by the project facilitator and Center research staff, were administered once during 1991-92 school year. The questionnaires asked for descriptions of mentor activity and self-evaluated effects of mentor visits on student and teacher behavior. Summaries of the questionnaires were compiled by IRE and mailed to the project facilitator in August.

Responses by teachers and students are being used to revise and strengthen the mentor program for the 1992-93 school year. For example, when asked what aspect of the program they would like to change, female students overwhelmingly requested the addition of woman mentors. In response, two female mentors (both doctors) will join the mentor team in the fall of 1993. Principal Davis reports that there are plans to recruit more women.

The project facilitator and center research staff also discussed strategies for more directly involving teachers in program planning. In responses to questionnaires, teachers pointed to the need for more consistent and frequent scheduling of mentor time. The research team will address the need for increased teacher involvement in the program during the 1992-93 school year.

During the summer of 1992, center staff and the project facilitator collaborated in the development of a research design for 1992-1994. Data collection strategies will include program documentation by the project facilitator on the selection, content and frequency of mentors visits.

Project Implementation

Project implementation will be recorded by the project facilitator through monthly reports. Once every three months, she will describe her informal and formal responsibilities with regards to the project. The principal's role in the project will be captured through a semi-structured interview. Monthly and year end reports also will capture action research team members' participation and perspectives on program implementation.

Measuring Changes in Student Achievement and Behavior

The school projects that by 1993 nearly every student will be involved in the mentor program. In fall of 1993, the research team will select a cohort of students as their research sample. The likely cohort are seventh graders. These students will be administered the program assessment questionnaire twice over the course of the school year. Responses to the questionnaire will be analyzed to explore overall changes in student behavior and self-esteem. At this point, the project facilitator has identified four characteristics of positive self-esteem which she will propose that the team use to

analyze questionnaires. The four characteristics are connection, uniqueness, power and models.

Five or six students will be selected as "student mentor project historians." These students will keep scrapbooks on their experience in the program. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with each student during the school year. This aspect of the research design is two-fold. It will add depth to the data by mapping the subtle changes in students which the written questionnaire might not capture. Secondly, it supports overall project goals by involving those frequently overlooked, in this instance students, in program assessment.

Program Assessment

As part of the data collection strategy, mentors and teachers with mentors in their classrooms will complete the program assessment questionnaire twice over the course of the school year. The school expects the core mentor team to remain largely constant over the course of the next two years. The project facilitator and Center staff have discussed the possibility of identifying mentor project historians and teacher project historians who, like their student counterparts, would keep scrapbooks on their individual program experiences.

Up to this point, the project facilitator has assumed most of the responsibility for the data collection including administering the questionnaires and surveys. Both the Center and project facilitator are interested in evenly sharing responsibility for the research among the research team. One possibility discussed would be to have a teacher team member responsible for administering the teacher questionnaire.

Policy Context

Gompers' parent involvement initiative is taking place in a fertile policy context which can both positively and negatively influence the impact of the project. Policies for involving parents in children's learning exist at the school, state, and federal level.

School Policy

As part of the Chicago School Reform Act, a Local School Council has been established at the Gompers School. The Local School Council is responsible for developing a three year school improvement plan. The school improvement plan developed for school years 1992-1995 includes the following goals related to parent involvement:

- to increase parent and community involvement in the day to day activities of the school,

- to increase school participation in the Local School Council, Parent Teachers Association, and Parent Partnership Activities,
- to increase the number of parent volunteers,
- to continue to offer training and education for parents through monthly partnership meetings,
- to encourage participation and support of community residents, business organizations, and other local institutions.

Four mentors were elected to the Local School Council for the 1992-93 school year. All four are parent representatives.

State Policy

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 created a new mechanism for parent involvement in school-based educational decision-making. The law mandates the formation of Local School Councils. The LSCs are responsible for setting policy around curriculum, attendance and school budget. Each LSC must be made up of six parents, two teachers, and two community residents and, at the high school level, a student. The principal has non-voting power. Parents and community representatives are elected by community residents.

The law made changes in how selected Federal and state policies aimed at supporting parent involvement are distributed. Illinois has a program for disadvantaged children similar to the Federal Chapter 1 program. The State program was developed as a means of creating supplementary funding for high-poverty schools. The Chicago School Reform Act shifted control of Chapter 1 funds to the local school councils. The law also mandated that funds be used for actual program costs. During the 1991-92 school year, state Chapter 1 funds were used exclusively for instructional purposes at the Gompers School.

Federal Policies

During 1991-92, Federal Chapter 1 funds were the only source of funds used to directly support the Parent Involvement Program. No Chapter 1 funds were used to support the mentor program, which is supported exclusively by private funds. In 1991-92, the school used Chapter 1 funds to provide parents with a three-day orientation and training for parents of Chapter 1 students. Participating parents were paid a stipend of $30.00 per day for their participation.

GOMPERS FINE ARTS OPTION SCHOOL
PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)

ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To study the effects of mentoring program on students' self-esteem and academic achievement and on levels of parent involvement.
(Sample: Students in grade 7 (1991-92) and their families)

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible ?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Keep records of how mentoring program gets developed	Monthly reports Principal/Facilitator interview Facilitator memos Minutes of mentor meetings	Elizabeth Allen ?? 	Sept. – June Sept. – June	On-going ?
2. Examine effects mentoring project is having through the eyes of: a. students b. mentors c. teachers d. families	Student questionnaires Student scrapbooks Minutes of mentor meetings Mentor scrapbooks Mentor questionnaires Teacher reports Teacher questionnaires Family interviews	Team?? 5 – 6 current eighth graders ?? Mentors Team Teachers Team	June 1993 June 1994 On-going ??	 ? ?
3. Keep achievement and behavioral records of students in sample.	Academic records, Teacher reports, other	Team??	??	?

Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School
1669 Dorchester Avenue
Dorchester, MA 02122
Phone: (617) 282-3178
Grades: Pre K-5
Enrollment: 200

Parent Partnership: Empowering Families to Help Children Succeed

Action Research Project: What are the effects of the home visits on children's learning and on their families' involvement in school activities?

Action Research Team Members

Parents/Parent Educators
Evelyn Ashby
La Jaughn Chaplin
Easter Farley
Mary Greene
Diane Greenidge
Andra Harris
Gail Harris
Teresa Knight
Joanne Maranian
Kim McLeod
Rosalind Montgomery
Allie Sullivan

Teachers
Jim McNeil
Arlene LaSane

Principal
Bill Henderson

Facilitator
Ilene Carver

PATRICK O'HEARN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:
Empowering Families to Help Children

School and Community Context

The Patrick O'Hearn School is located in a racially and economically mixed neighborhood of Boston. A single story, bright, relatively modern facility, the school is fully accessible to the handicapped. The school became a special education integration model school in 1989. Children with severe disabilities from pre-schoolers to grade 4 and regular education children learn together in the same classrooms.

O'Hearn is a relatively small school currently serving approximately 219 children pre-school through grade 5. Of the school's students, 58% are African American, 29 % white, 9% Latino and 7% other. Fourteen percent of the children are bilingual in Spanish, Haitian-Creole or Vietnamese, and 66% of the children are enrolled in the free lunch program.

In 1991-92, on national standardized achievement tests, the school's students scored in the 42nd percentile in reading and in the 44th in math. All students were promoted in 1991. As of 1991-92, there was no reported vandalism. Close to 95% of students attend school regularly. An average of three to five students are referred to the principal's office on any day. Most forms of discipline are carried out by classroom teachers.

The 19-member school staff includes nine regular classroom teachers, nine special education teachers, and one Chapter 1 teacher. Teachers and specialists team to work with all children in integrated classrooms where there is a high student-teacher ratio.

O'Hearn is involved in a number of home-school-community partnerships, including collaboration with a local community health center, a local university, a community art program for special needs children, and a law firm.

In the past, the school has offered a variety of before and after school arts, recreational and academic enrichment programs. The school wants to expand these but has felt real constraints due to late school hours and the elimination by the school department of all custodial overtime.

Summary Of First-Year Progress

Goals

The Home Visitor Program at O'Hearn is one element in a series of programs designed to build parent involvement at the school and expand the role of the parents in educational development in the home. O'Hearn received approximately $22,230 from the Institute for Responsive Education in 1991-92 to help support parent involvement efforts. A portion of funds are being used to support the costs of the project facilitator, Ilene Carver.

The families who were chosen for visits had not previously been involved in school activities and often had no contact with their children's classroom teacher. In addition to the Home Visitor Program, a Parent Center has been established in the school, a newsletter was initiated this year, and parents became increasingly involved in planning programs (social and educational) at the school.

Implementation

In the Fall of 1991, teachers at O'Hearn were contacted and asked to identify students whose families they felt could benefit from contact by a home visitor. Approximately 11 parents volunteered for the Home Visitor Program. They received a day of training in December, and visits began in December through January. The family was contacted to schedule a convenient time for each visit and the home visitor then completed a report on the visit. The home visitor met with the facilitator once a month to discuss the visits: scheduling difficulties, family issues raised during the visits, future strategies and emerging needs of the home visitor were addressed. In April, the home visitors met for a day-long workshop to review the program for the year and establish new goals for the coming year.

Reflections on Year 1

Nine of the eleven families (88%) visited between December and March attended the Family Night Pizza party held at the school in late March. For these families, this was their first visit to the school. Teachers and family members talked informally during the party and made plans for further communication.

The team believes that targeting previously uninvolved families is a good strategy, as parent involvement is already well developed in the school. For a few families, repetitive visits to help with family issues and constant encouragement to attend school are extremely valuable. But the home visitor is probably most effective as a complement to varied efforts to develop parent involvement.

Home visiting is a potentially beneficial element to a general effort in linking families and the schools. Several issues remain to be explored. First, home visiting is not enough. Once the parents do come to the schools, the question of what programs and avenues for participation the school offers them still remains. Also, the parents who completed visits this year had very limited training. What is the role of the non-professional, that is, the volunteer parent, in the Home Visitor Program? What structures and types of assistance will such visitors need to provide help to others and to develop the skills and understandings of the best strategies to employ when working with the families they are visiting? During the first year their goodwill was extremely high and their intuitive responses have proven extremely valuable.

The impact of the program on those individuals who are doing the home visiting is also an important area to explore. The group came together to discuss the issues that arose during home visits and supported each other. They provided examples from their visits and suggested new ways of approaching the issues that they faced. They energized each other by acknowledging the difficulty and the value of the work they had undertaken. Also, as a group they identified their needs for greater training in specific areas: housing, employment, family responses to special education for children, substance abuse, and child abuse.

Research Design

The Home Visitor Program established in 1991-1992 will continue through the 1992-1993 school year. A new initiative to contact all kindergarten and first grade families will also begin this fall. Materials are being prepared that will be given to each family emphasizing the welcoming attitude of O'Hearn to all families, including many simple activities that parents can do at home with their children. As a result of the learnings from the Home Visitor Program in Year 1, the consensus among the volunteers was that home visiting should have two forms. One aspect of the program will continue the efforts of the first year to reach families that have had little or no involvement with the school for years. The second effort will involve a general visiting program to reach all parents at the beginning of their child's school experience. That second effort would clearly establish the normal expectation of participation. Additional funds are being sought to hire two half-time parent visitors to have responsibility for this aspect of the visiting program.

The new initiative for Year 2 is to visit families of all new children in the school to establish communication at the beginning of a child's school experience, which is expected to increase the amount of overall parent involvement in the school, while the targeting home visits will continue to draw in some of the least involved families at all grade levels.

Research on the Home Visitor Program has six components:

- A case study booklet has been designed for use by teachers who have students in their classes who are being visited through the targeted outreach program. Each month teachers will briefly describe student behaviors in the classroom or throughout the school and any conversations or contact with the student's family that has taken place.

- Home visitors will continue to complete visit reports and to share their thoughts about the visiting process at their monthly meetings. These reports and meeting notes are available to the research effort.

- Families of kindergartners and first graders will be surveyed in the spring to determine their response to the home visitor from O'Hearn and identify ways that they have become involved in the school. This information can be compared to previous involvement by kindergarten and first grade families.

- A sample of parents who have been with the home visitors for two years will be interviewed in March 1993 to assess the impact of the home visitor project from two perspectives: the impact they see on the families that have been visited and the impact the Home Visiting experience has had on them personally.

- Project staff will interview a sample of the families visited to determine their perceptions of the visiting program.

- Finally, the common survey instruments administered in the Fall of 1991 will be used again in the Spring of 1993.

Policy Context

The O'Hearn Family Outreachers Program is developing within a school, district, state and Federal policy context in which there appears to be an increasing support for parent involvement activities. The following section discusses selected policy initiatives at the school, district, state and Federal levels which have the potential to influence the school's family involvement efforts.

School and District Policy

O'Hearn Annual Education Plan

Each Boston Public School is responsible for developing an Annual Education Plan. Increased Parent and Community Participation is one of three district priorities

identified by the superintendent. This past year, the Family Outreachers Team took responsibility for crafting the parent and community involvement objectives for the school. Their primary goal was "to enhance the frequency and quality of interactions between parents through grade three children who are identified as needing additional educational supports at home."

The plan identifies two measures of success in achieving these objectives: (1) 90% of identified families will visit the school at least twice during the school year to share ideas with staff and parent leaders about improving their children's learning, and (2) 75% of families will be visited at home at least twice during the school year. During the 1992-93 school year, home visits will be made to families of all new children in the school regardless of need or socioeconomic status or whether the family has been visited before. Principal Henderson feels this will help reduce the potential stigma of being visited and will help the school make early connections with families.

District Policy

A. School-Based Management

O'Hearn is participating in a district school-based management project. The stated purpose of the program is "to create a process in which all members of the education community including faculty, parents, administration and students at the school level collaborate in identifying problems, defining goals, formulating policy and implementing programs." Each participating school must establish a school site council. School site councils at small elementary schools must be composed of five teachers, three parents and the principal. The responsibility of the school site council is said to include "all matters relating to the operation of the school including development of annual education plan, budgeting and disbursement of funds and hiring of personnel."

B. Intra-district Choice Plan

Boston is in the third year of a controlled choice plan which allows families to select their top three choices from among their zone's schools. The city is divided into four zones: three geographic -- that include most of the elementary and middle schools -- and one citywide zone for the high schools. Parents of each entering Boston Public School student sign up for at least five schools within his or her zone. In 1991, O'Hearn reported a waiting list of 90 families for kindergarten at the school.

C. Healthy Kids Initiative

In 1992, the City of Boston was awarded funds under the Federal Drug Free Schools and Communities program for the Healthy Kids initiative. The goal of the

program is to "build a real union of teachers, parents, and students in support of healthy students at every elementary school." The program will take a train the trainers approach to building parent and teacher collaboration across the district's 75 elementary schools. The program will provide funds for parents and teachers at each school and assist schools in starting parent centers. Thirty-three schools were awarded grants of $4,950 during 1992-93.

Federal Policies

The school is currently receiving Federal funds under the Chapter 1 and the Special Education Program (P.L. 102-119). The school is a full inclusion program. All children including those receiving services under Chapter 1 and special education are taught together in integrated classrooms. Funds are used to support the cost of one teacher. Special Education funds support nine teachers or "specialists." Rather than pulling students out of the classroom, Chapter 1, regular education and specialists work together as a team. The integration of Chapter 1, special education and regular education programs enables the school to reach out and provide services to parents as a unified group via school wide projects such as the Family Center.

PATRICK O'HEARN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)

ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To study the effects of structured home-visits on children's learning and on their families' involvement in school activities.
(Sample: Children in grades k-1 (1991-92) and their families)

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Teachers keep records of student behavior	Being developed	Teachers	Monthly	??
2. Home visitors keep records of visits	Home visitor form	Home visitor	On-going	
3. Facilitator keeps notes on how home visitor project is built	Monthly reports Other correspondence	Ilene Carver	On-going	
4. Team keeps notes on home visitors monthly meetings		??		
5. Interviews with teachers and visited parents	IRE staff			
6. Keep achievement and behavioral records of students in sample	Academic records, teacher reports? other	Team		

Matthew Sherman Elementary School
450 24th Street
San Diego, CA 92102
Phone: (619) 525-7424
Fax: (619) 231-5833
Grades: K-5
Enrollment: 1220

Parent Partnership: Sherman Outreach Project

Action Research Project: What are the effects of the home-visitor project on family involvement at school?

Action Research Team Members

Parents
Maria Acuña
Paula Maute

Teachers
Alex Aguilar (Aide)
Alma Alivares
Michael Barnes
Yolanda Golinda (Aide)
Estela Martinez
Myrna Lujan Mendez
Cecilia Rivera (Aide)
Jon Sengstack

Students
Charito Cruz
Nenin Gonzalez

Principal
Cecilia Estrada

Facilitator
Rene Nuñez

MATTHEW SHERMAN BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT PREPARATORY SCHOOL: The Home Visitor Program

School and Community Context

Matthew Sherman has an enrollment of 1,220 students of whom 85% are Spanish-speaking, 5% are African-American, 5% are Asian-American, and 5% are white. Ninety percent of the students are non-English speaking, which has made bilingual education a priority. In addition to the language barriers, most students are confronted with issues of poverty -- 98% of the students receive some form of public assistance.

The Sherman school is located primarily in a 16-year-old building. In addition to the main building, there are 24 portable classrooms and an annex with five classrooms. The school shows the wear and tear that accompanies overcrowding and requires better upkeep. The school has a staff lounge, three computer labs, a counseling center, a media center, and rooms allocated for support staff and parents. Open classrooms with lofts and partitions for walls are common in the main building. Students eat their lunch in an open air arbor or in the auditorium. Vandalism in the school has been reduced by 90% in the last five years, and little graffiti appears on the walls.

Sherman has roughly 10-15 disciplinary referrals per class per year, 31 suspensions, and no expulsions. Given its size, this is a remarkably quiet school.

The staff consists primarily of bilingual education teachers (with 29 to date) and many classroom aides. Out of a total of 120 staff members, 25% are bilingual education teachers and 45% are classroom aides. The school has one principal, one vice principal, eleven regular education teachers, four special education teachers, 30 teachers' aides, 24 instructional aides, and five custodial staff.

The community surrounding Sherman consists of apartment buildings, boarding houses, and rental units, many in some stage of disrepair. Many of the buildings are marked by vandalism and graffiti, although Sherman itself seems to be exempt from much of this activity. It is common knowledge that some of these buildings are the sites of drug dealing -- suggesting that, in context, the school represents an island of safety for elementary school children. Furthermore, Principal Estrada has been in negotiation with an absentee landlord who owns the building across the street from the school. The building is known for its drug dealing and other dangerous activities. Principal Estrada hopes to obtain an apartment free of charge to use as a parent center in exchange for moving families (preferably from Sherman) into

the remainder of the building. By occupying the building with families and a family center, the principal hopes to create a safer environment around the school.

Sherman draws upon resources from the community to augment their programs. For example, the school has become a site for Latino parents to organize and empower themselves to fight for improving the quality of their children's education. The Organization of Latino Parents is an independently funded organization that spurs family involvement among the largely Latino community and works hard to bring in more resources to the school.

Summary Of First-Year Progress

The Sherman school has spent its first year preparing for the home visitor component of its family involvement project. The project, as a whole, consists of four components, all of which are coordinated by their action research team. These four components are: 1) home visitors, 2) teacher training workshops, 3) the Parent Room, and 4) the Organization of Latino Parents. The project is supported in part by a grant from the Institute for Responsive Education. The school received approximately $14,000 for the 1991-92 school year. A portion of funds are being used to support the cost of a project facilitator.

Once Sherman had received its IRE grant, Principal Cecilia Estrada sent notices to teachers about participating on the action research team. Principal Estrada and Facilitator Rene Nuñez began to identify some teachers they thought would be good candidates for the team. They followed up with these teachers and persuaded them to join the team. Two parents (one Spanish-speaking) were recruited through the parent room at the school. The student council was asked to select two students to serve on the team. In addition to teachers, classroom aides also joined the action research team from the beginning. After the home visitor program began, the action research team was restructured to include home visitors and teachers participating in the home visitor teams.

The team decided in the early spring of 1992 to concentrate their efforts on planning for conducting home visits in July 1992. (Sherman is a year-round school and therefore, does not close in the summer. In fact, their "new year" begins in July.) They began by collecting information from teachers through surveys and determining what their focus will be during the actual visits. Because preparation for the program took longer than anticipated, it was decided to postpone visits in the homes of second graders to the fall of 1992. Home visitor teams will be set up in each second grade classroom, with the team consisting of the teacher and one or two parent aides who actually make the visit.

In order to identify those families to be visited, the project worked with second grade teachers. The team then established an interview committee who would be responsible for identifying home visitors. The school scheduled a meeting for parents where the home visitor program was described and asked parents who were interested in working as home visitors to sign up to be screened by the interview committee.

Once selected, the home visitors were trained over the course of two days. The training was provided by district personnel, Principal Estrada, a group of second grade teachers, the parent coordinator, and Facilitator Rene Nuñez. The district representatives were in charge of explaining grade-level expectations for students, especially regarding bilingual education. Principal Estrada presented on understanding the school system and dealing with differences in roles and expectations in American schools and schools in other countries. The teachers were responsible for developing materials to assist families with school work at home. The parent coordinator provided information about community resources and location of services for families. Finally, Rene Nuñez described the research component of this project and using journals to obtain information about families and the home visitor program.

Parent questionnaires were developed to be filled out during visits. The team enlisted the help of another action research school, Patrick O'Hearn in Boston, to develop training materials and to identify important components of successful home visitor programs.

Using a division of labor approach, Sherman has decided to establish sub-committees in charge of specific tasks to get the home visitor program off the ground. Among the tasks specified were determining goals for the project, identifying home visitors (including advertising for the project), training of home visitors, and data collection (interviews with second grade families).

The content of the project includes multilingual visitors who can reach out to a broad cultural spectrum of families (although the home visitors are really all Spanish speaking). Through home visits, families are brought in for parent-teacher meetings, a math program, and presentations on specific topics, and parent involvement is encouraged in various activities at the school.

The home visitor component took much longer to get rolling than originally anticipated. The team went through a process of redefining their priorities and focus for this year's intervention. They also set about drafting a proposal for a parent involvement grant from the San Diego school district to help fund their project. In addition, the team suffered from lack of continuity among their members. The year-round status of the school meant that there was rotation of parents and teachers at the school and therefore, fluctuations in attendance at meetings. The team has been

working on a system to maintain stability in attendance. Over time, they were able to identify a core group of parents and teachers who constituted the action research team.

Another problem has been scheduling. Principal Estrada has been primarily responsible for chairing the meetings, but her schedule makes running the meetings more difficult. One solution has been to have a teacher run the meetings in place of the principal to create more consistency between meetings.

For the next year, the action research team has developed a plan for implementing their home visitor program. Home visitors will be trained by school district personnel with experience in home-school partnerships. Teachers will also participate in staff development workshops and will assist in developing curriculum and materials for the home visits.

Policy Context

The Matthew Sherman Business and Government Preparatory School is located in San Diego, California -- a school district and a state known for their commitment to parent involvement and providing resources in order to enhance the involvement of families in the schools.

District Policies

As part of the San Diego City Schools, the Sherman School shares the district's commitment to involving families in their children's education. The San Diego City Schools have an explicit Parent Involvement Policy Statement which illustrates the district's recognition of the importance of family-school collaboration to support successful student achievement.

The district parent involvement policy foresees involvement of families in schools in a variety of ways: (i) participation in school governance, (ii) effective two-way communication with parents with special attention paid to cultural and other forms of diversity, (iii) engagement of parents through development of strategies and programmatic structures, (iv) coordination of school staff to build continuity of parent involvement from kindergarten to grade twelve, and (v) use of schools as a locus to connect students and families to community resources.

The district parent involvement policy established a parent involvement office at the district level with a full-time coordinator. Jeanna Preston has been instrumental in disseminating information on parent involvement to San Diego schools, including Sherman. She was involved in the training of home visitors at Sherman. In addition to the district office, the Sherman school consulted with the City Wide Parent Institute

founded by Vahac Mardirosian for training their home visitors. The district parent involvement office has also made funds available to schools for parent involvement activities. One of the first activities of the action-research team at Sherman was to submit an application for funds from this grant program. The Sherman has had to rely on outside funding to pay for parent involvement activities in order to avoid bureaucratic requirements imposed by district rules.

Sherman's four-prong approach to family involvement fits nicely within the district's framework for parent involvement. The Organization of Latino Parents provides a mechanism for parent participation in school governance and yielding financial resources to the school. The Home Visitor program enables the school to build two-way communication between a widely diverse community and the school staff. The teacher training workshop coordinates efforts between school staff and parent involvement activities. The parent room serves as a central place where students and families can get information about community resources available to them. In addition to these specific interventions, the action research team coordinates these strategies and programmatic structures which facilitate active participation of families in their children's learning.

Another district policy which has had an impact on their home visitor/action research project is the year-round status of the school. To accommodate large enrollment numbers, the district opened some schools year round with students attending school on a rotation basis. With different sets of students, and consequently parents, attending Sherman at different times of the year, the team went through a series of "personnel" changes. This forced the team facilitator to spend the first few monthly meetings reorienting new parents about the program and action research. The lack of continuity in team member make-up also created problems between those who actually made decisions and those who ended up implementing them.

State Policies

The Parent Involvement Policy, established by the California State Board of Education, shares the same language as the San Diego district policy. The state policy requires districts and schools to establish programs which not only involve parents but also reflect the diversity of familial and student needs.

The state policy details the kind of information and training activities parent involvement programs should provide in order to make parents knowledgeable partners. These activities include (but are not limited to) the following: (i) development of parenting skills which support children's learning at home; (ii) dissemination and training of techniques related to home learning activities; (iii) coordination of community and family support services; (iv) two-way communication between home and school regarding school programs and children's progress; (v)

training and involvement of parents in instructional and support roles in school; and (vi) development of parental roles and leadership in school governance and advocacy.

In addition to the state parent involvement policy, the California State Legislature passed a parent involvement law last year which requires districts to craft parent involvement policies for their schools. Many of the stipulations in the Waters law (named after Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles) are consistent with the established parent involvement policies and give legislative backing to existing policies.

Again, as described in the district policy section, Sherman's family involvement program is consistent with state mandates for parent involvement. Planning for the teacher training workshops includes workshops for parents on home learning activities and family support of children's learning at home. The home visitor program builds two-way communication between school and home with emphasis on school programs for families. The Organization of Latino Parents trains parents to play a variety of roles at Sherman, including instructional, governance, and advocacy roles. In fact, the Organization of Latino Parents has been instrumental in raising funds for the Sherman and has petitioned the district to fund Sherman more adequately to reflect the needs of the school.

Federal Policies

Sherman has taken advantage of federal Chapter 1 funds for a school improvement program which supports the home visitors program. The funds were used for the development of materials and questionnaires, training, consultants, and worksheets. The training lasted 1 1/2 days and cost $1,000. Parent involvement was written into the original site plan as required by federal Chapter 1 regulations under the Hawkins-Stafford amendments, and, therefore, made it easier to use funds for the home visitors program.

In addition to Chapter 1, Sherman receives federal funds for its bilingual education program, although these funds are not used directly in the parent involvement program. With the implementation of the home visitors program, however, it is conceivable that second-grade teachers, paid with bilingual education money, will participate on home visitor teams, using bilingual education money in a more flexible manner than originally anticipated.

Research Design

In order to structure reflection and facilitate feedback regarding the home visitors program, the following research design has been drafted.

Research Focus

The focus for the Sherman school action-research team is to determine the impact of home visits on involving more families in school-related activities and in their children's education.

Data Collection Strategies

During the 1991-92 school year, the Sherman action research team collected data on their school profile and parent/community involvement activities. School profile data included demographic statistics, attendance and expulsion data, school staff profile, school appearance and surroundings, and student test scores. The action research team also interviewed Principal Estrada concerning the Sherman school mission and her plans for integrating the home visitor program into the school. Finally, the action research team collected information about two other parent/community involvement programs and the connections to be forged between the home visitors program and the school's parent/community involvement activities.

In addition to developing a school profile and collecting parent/community involvement data, the school issued a set of surveys to teachers, parents, and other staff to find out about their attitudes towards home-school-community partnerships and school climate. These surveys were commonly administered to all eight action research sites.

For the 1992-93 school year, the action-research team will be involved in a set of activities to document the implementation and early assessment of their home visitors program. Documentation of program implementation will include action-research meeting notes having to do with selection of families to be visited and the home visitor teams. Training of home visitor teams will be captured through training notes and materials. Record keeping related to the content and frequency of visits will be tracked through home visitor forms. In addition to the initial preparation for launching the home visitor program, documentation of on-going support will include action-research meeting notes and materials from staff development workshops and home visitor training.

Initial assessment of the home visitor program will concentrate on effects of home visits on family, teacher, and student attitudes towards school climate and family involvement and effects on student achievement. The perspectives of families, teachers, and students will be culled from common questionnaires to be administered by the action-research team and by in-depth interviews to be conducted by off-site facilitators. In addition to questionnaires and interviews, student records and teacher

interviews about student behavior and attitudes will be collected. The team will also collect data on the impact of home visits on family involvement in school-related activities.

SHERMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PARENT TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT (1992-93)

ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Objective: To examine the effects of home visits on levels of family involvement in school activities.
(Sample: 2nd graders and their families)

Action Steps	Resources	Who is Responsible?	Timeline	Date Due
1. Measure effectiveness of program for home visitors	Teacher-developed training materials Home visitor interviews	Teachers, district representatives, and principal	Mid-Sept.	
2. Measure impact of home visitor program on families	Home visitors records School involvement record Questionnaires for "visited" families	TBA		
3. Measure impact of home visitor program on students	Student records Teacher interviews Focus groups with students	TBA		

IV. COMMENTS ON PROJECT PROGRESS

Near the close of the first year, we can venture some impressions about project progress. These do not necessarily reflect the views of the more than a hundred collaborating researchers.

1. The design seems to be sound.

The need for key elements of the project design are being confirmed: careful site selection; written agreements; on-site help by a facilitator supplemented by extensive staff assistance from Boston; the importance of training, team building and orientation; the importance of multiple data sources, and the need for outside financial support to make the intervention and the research possible outside of the school district's budget.

2. Doing research in real world school and community settings is difficult.

Our expectations about the difficulties of doing this kind of research have not been changed nor our anxieties relieved. The culture, traditions, and conditions of schools are not "friendly" for research and reflection. We are often amazed that our collaborating colleagues are willing to continue to collaborate with us, given the difficulties and pressures of their lives in the schools.

The pressures on urban school principals are especially great. Most of them are genuinely committed to the project and to finding answers to the questions being raised; but few can give the time and energy that they would like. In exasperation over some glitches in communication about the research component in one school, one of the principals said: "I'm running a school. I can't be a researcher."

3. Making the action research team concept work in practice is complex.

Making the action research teams work well is the most difficult part of the design. There is virtually no experience in many schools for working in collaborative teams of any kind, let alone teams that are expected to ask questions, get answers, reflect, and plan action based on the results of their inquiries. When the teams include parents, there has been even less experience and the task becomes even more difficult. We are striving to work with the schools and school teams in a respectful way. The Center researchers seek to give the participating schools the flexibility to design projects which are responsive to their school and community needs while at the same time to provide the structure, direction and even routine which can to help insure that the project produces valuable data. We also seek to encourage full participation of

parents, principals, and teachers in the project while acknowledging the demands and constraints which they face. We want the teams to emphasize both process and outcomes. We want a balance between Center staff and site analysis. The points of balance on all of the matters -- like parent and community involvement itself -- will vary from school to school. Our hope is that at the end of three years we will have a good idea of what kind of collaborative research works best and under what conditions. Learning much more about collaborative action research has become one of our primary objectives.

In spite of many difficulties, we are encouraged that the project can make a difference for children. Our first year survey showed that many League schools are energetically extending their parent and community involvement programs. What is missing is comprehensive planning, implementation and evaluation of programs which can help schools build programs which make a difference for children. That is what the project hopes to add.

It may take schools more than three years to feel comfortable in combining action with reflection to produce meaningful research. But, news from the field suggests that they are ready for a challenge. In the words of Darlene Dalton, principal of the Atenville Elementary School in West Virginia, "This isn't a two and a half year project. This a ten year project. We plan to be looking for ways to help our children, today and a long ways down the road."

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VI. APPENDIX

FEDERAL POLICY CONTEXT

LIST OF FUNDING SOURCES

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Bilingual Education Act , Title VII, ESEA	To provide limited English proficient (LEP) students with the opportunity to learn to read, write, speak and comprehend English in order to help them succeed in the school system.	• research • teacher training • technical assistance and dissemination. • Transitional Bilingual Education • developmental bilingual education • family literacy • preschool • special education • instructional materials development	Harry Logel US Dept. of Education OBEML/MES Bldg. 330 C Street, SW Room 5082 Washington, DC 20202-6510 202-732-5715 ASPIRA 1112 16th St., NW Suite 340 Washington, DC 20036
Chapter 1 of ESEA	To fund early education to schools in low-income areas to meet the needs of educationally deprived children. Local school districts receiving funds under Chapter 1 must set up formal parent involvement programs. LEAs are required to coordinate services provided under Chapter 1 with those provided to LEP and Handicapped Children. Those schools with a greater than 75% low-income student population can use funds to benefit all of the students in the school.	• regular conferences • parent councils • school outreach to the home	William Lubosco Tom Fagan Compensatory Education Programs US Dept. of Education 400 Maryland Ave., SW Suite 2043 Washington, DC 20202-6132 202-401-1682 Center for Law and Education 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW Suite 510 Washington, DC 20009 202-986-3000
Chapter 2 of ESEA	To help state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) improve elementary and secondary education, meet the special educational needs of at-risk students, and support effective schools programs. SEAs and LEAs have discretion over the design and implementation of Chapter 2 programs. In FY 1992, the budget was approximately $450 million.	• Innovative programs will be able to link the criteria for Chapter 2 with parent involvement aimed at helping children succeed in their school, homework, and learning.	Lee E. Wickline Chapter 2 Program US Dept. of Education 400 Maryland Ave., SW Washington, DC 20202 202-401-1154

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Child Care and Development Block Grant	Federal program giving $2.5 billion for three years to states to help them improve access to quality child care for low-income families and to increase the supply of child care providers. The Act authorized a five-year, $1.5 billion entitlement program that provides financial assistance to working families who are at risk of becoming dependent on welfare.	• Before and after-school care either in schools or community organizations. • Expand and improve availability of before and after-school care and early childhood development services. • Direct payments to help families pay for child care, or to increase the child care supply or improve its quality.	Mark Regan, Director Child Care and Development Block Grants Administration for Children and Families Office of Family Assistance 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW Washington, DC 20447 202-401-9326 Helen Blank Children's Defense Fund 122 C Street, NW Washington, DC 20001 202-628-8787
Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act	The stated purpose of this act is for drug/alcohol abuse prevention and education. Funding is available to States, school districts, and communities. The budget for FY 1992 was approximately $623 million. Approximately $507 million went to the state and local branches, while the remaining funds went to discretionary grants and other national programs under this act.	• To support the development and expansion of alcohol and other drug prevention programs for school-age children and youth.	Alicia Coro Division of Drug Free Schools and Communities U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, DC 20202-6139 202-401-1599 ext.2135
Even Start (Part of Chapter 1, ESEA)	To integrate early childhood education with adult literacy and parent education. Even Start is aimed at families where one or both of the parents, with at least one child ages 1 through 7, need adult basic skills education. The child must reside in a Chapter 1-participating attendance area. Generally, qualifying parents either did not graduate from high school and need adult basic skills education or General Education Development (GED) training, or have limited English proficiency.	• Teaching adults how to read and care for their children while also preparing children for school. • Coordination with other federal programs such as Adult Education, Education of the Handicapped, the Job Training Partnership Act, Head Start, and various literacy programs.	William Lubosco Deputy Director Compensatory Education Programs U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Ave. SW Suite 2043 Washington, DC 20202-6132 202-401-1682

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Family-School Partnerships	This federal education program authorizes demonstration grants for innovative partnerships. The purpose is to encourage local school districts to increase the involvement of parents in education. Part of FIRST (see below).	• Help families work at home with their children to improve achievement and develop positive attitudes toward education. • Train teachers and staff to work with families. • Train families to build educational partnerships. • Evaluate family involvement activities. • Determine what barriers prevent family participation and what steps are needed to increase participation.	FIRST Office U.S. Department of Education 555 New Jersey Avenue NW Room 522 Washington, DC 20208-5524 202-219-1496 Education Commission of the States 1860 Lincoln Street Suite 300 Denver, CO 80295 303-299-3600
Family Support Act	Federal program passed in 1988 which is an inter-agency collaborative effort to help move the family toward self-sufficiency rather than long-term dependence on public assistance.	• Child support enforcement • Literacy skills • Parenting classes • Child care • Counseling • Training and support	Michelle Jefferson U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children Office of Child Support and Enforcement 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW Washington, DC 20447 202-401-9373 Family Resource Coalition 200 S. Michigan Avenue Suite 1520 Chicago, IL 60604 312-341-0900
FIRST Grants	Funds innovative projects to encourage creative thinking and hard work by local school districts and by individual schools to design and implement new possibilities for school, family, and community partnerships. It also shares information about successful projects and reforms with parents, educators, and citizens.	• Helping educationally disadvantaged students meet higher educational standards • Providing incentives for improved performance • Promoting closer ties among school teachers, administration, families, and the local community • Refocusing priorities to reallocate existing human and financial resources to serve children better. • Twenty-five percent of funds must go to school-level projects involving one school or a consortium of schools.	FIRST Program U.S. Department of Education 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW Room 522 Washington, DC 20208-5524 202-219-1496

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Follow Through	The Office of Economic Opportunity launched this program, a K-3 school-based program designed to help sustain the gains made by children in Head Start with the focus on alternative educational models. Head Start children are eligible for this program. Sixty percent of the children enrolled in Follow Through must have been previously enrolled in a Head Start program.	• Follow Through models cover the years from preschool through third grade and emphasize parent involvement (congruent with Head Start's). As a result, Follow Through offers children and parents some continuity as they make the preschool transition.	Robert Alexander Follow Through Program U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, DC 20202 202-401-1725
Head Start	Federal program reauthorized for four years to provide comprehensive services to infants and toddlers. The 1992 budget is $2.2 billion with funding expected to reach $7.6 billion by 1994.	• Parent and Child Centers, comprehensive child development and family support centers serving 0-3 year olds, in every state. Comprehensive health and social services are provided for prenatal care, infants and toddlers, and for the family as a whole. • The Head Start Transition Act demonstration projects must show successful approaches in supporting children and families as they move from the Head Start to first three years of school.	Head Start Bureau U.S. Department of Health and Human Services P.O. Box 1182 Washington, DC 20013 202-205-0572 National Head Start Association 1220 King Street Suite 200 Alexandria, VA 22314 703-739-0875
Healthy Start	This program is an intensive, community-focused service integration effort to expand prenatal care and nutrition services for women in 15 communities with exceptionally high infant-mortality rates. The Department of Health and Human Services provided thirteen urban and two rural areas with $25 million in grants in its initial year. Its goal is to reduce infant mortality by 50% within five years in areas of the U.S. where the rate is approximately twice the national average.	• family planning • pregnancy testing • prenatal care • care during and after delivery • pediatric care • social services • mental health services • substance abuse prevention and treatment • outreach, home visits • child care • transportation • risk assessment • dental care • nutrition	Dr. Thurma McCann Healthy Start Project Director National Health Service Corps. 5600 Fishers Lane Room 7A27 Rockville, MD 20857 301-443-0543 National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality Switzer Building Room 2014 330 C Street, SW Washington, DC 20201 202-472-1364

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Human Services Reauthorization Act	This legislation authorizes a federal grant program to assist states in the establishment of networks of local family resource and support programs that enhance families' abilities to stay together and succeed. Grants would be awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services to states on a competitive basis. Funding from $1.5 million per year for small states to $6 million for large states.	• Can help states support local efforts to provide families with comprehensive services • Can help improve economically disadvantaged and/or highly mobile families' access to comprehensive services.	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families 370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW Washington, DC 20447 202-619-0257 Family Resource Coalition 200 S. Michigan Avenue Suite 1520 Chicago, IL 60604 312-341-0900
Job Training Partnership Act	The purpose of JTPA is to prepare youth (ages sixteen to twenty-one) and unskilled adults (age twenty-two and older) for entry into the labor force through job training.	• Individuals who are economically disadvantaged or experiencing employment barriers can be served. • Funds for state education and coordination grants to provide assistance to state education agencies for employment and training. • Direct education and employment services to economically disadvantaged youths over the summer.	Hugh Davies U.S. Department of Labor 200 Constitution Avenue, NW Room N4709 Washington, DC 20210 202-535-0580
Maternal and Child Health Block Grants	The CISS promotion projects are intended to be conducted within the context of overall State efforts to develop comprehensive, community based systems of services and are to focus on unmet needs and service gaps identified in the State's MCH Services Block Grant plan. In the 15 communities in the nation with HRSA-administered Healthy Start grants, CISS projects must also be coordinated with Healthy Start program efforts.	• Maternal and infant home visiting activities in which case management services are provided in the home • Activities designed to increase the participation of obstetricians and pediatricians • Integrated maternal and child health service delivery (i.e., one-stop shopping) systems • MCH activities operated under the direction of a not-for-profit hospital • MCH activities targeted to serve rural populations • Services and activities (including day care services) for children with special health care needs.	John Gallicchio, Chief Grants Management Branch Office of Program Support Maternal and Child Health Bureau Room 18-12, Parklawn Building 5600 Fishers Lane Rockville, MD 20857 301-443-1440

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Medicaid	Medicaid gives federal financial assistance to states for medical services provided to low-income people.	• Can help economically disadvantaged families meet children's basic needs. • Medicaid can be used to cover 50-80 percent of the costs of certain early intervention services for a large number of infants and toddlers with disabilities.	William Toby, Administrator Medicaid U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 200 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20201 202-245-6726 Medicaid Bureau 200 East High Rise 6325 Security Blvd. Baltimore, MD 21207 301-966-7172
National Literacy Act	Federal program passed in July of 1991 which authorizes $1.8 billion for literacy programs for four years, including the Adult Education Act and Even Start, as well as a national clearinghouse of literacy information. Funds now available to community based organizations.	• The law provides $260 million for three years in basic grants to local school districts and community organizations interested in creating literacy and basic skills training programs. • The law authorizes $25 million for the establishment of state resource centers on literacy. • Businesses are encouraged to provide literacy skills to their workers and are provided with $5 million dollars for four years to do so.	Mike Dean U.S. Department of Education Division of Adult Education and Literacy 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, DC 20202-7240 202-732-2394 Bob Bickerton Director Bureau of Adult Education Massachusetts Department of Education 1385 Hancock Street Quincy, MA 02169 617-770-7500
Part H of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Federal program supporting early intervention programs for children who are handicapped or at-risk of developmental delay. The focus is on inter-agency coordination and it is family oriented. Part H provides a five-year grant program for states to plan and implement statewide, coordinated, comprehensive early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.	• An individual family service plan (IFSP) is developed for each family so that appropriate services can be obtained and also to encourage parental involvement in their child's development. • This is a formula grant program in which the lead agencies in each state determine how they are going to distribute the funds. Its possible to use the schools through such things as contracting mechanisms and a request for proposal process in the delivery of services.	Peggy Cvach U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services 330 C Street, SW Room 4617 Switzer Building Washington, DC 20202 202-732-5846 National Center for Clinical Infant Programs 2000 14th Street, North Suite 380 Arlington, VA 22201-2500 703-528-4300

Policy	Purpose	Potential Uses	Contact
Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act	Federal program encompassing several programs for homeless persons and includes specific provisions for ensuring access to education for homeless school-aged children and youth.	• State educational agencies must create and implement "state plans" for the education of homeless children. • SEAs must authorize an educational agency to make decisions about the educational placement of a homeless child • Include procedures to resolve disputes over placement • Assure that homeless children are enrolled in either the district in which they previously lived or the district of their temporary residence. • The state plans must assure that school districts provide homeless children with educational services comparable to those given to other students • Maintain and transfer homeless student records so that they are easily accessible when these children move from one educational placement to another.	Betsy Brand Assistant Secretary for Vocational Education U.S. Department of Education Mary E. Switzer Bldg. 330 C Street SW Washington, D.C. 20202 202-732-2251 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 918 F Street, NW Suite 412 Washington, DC 20004 202-638-2535